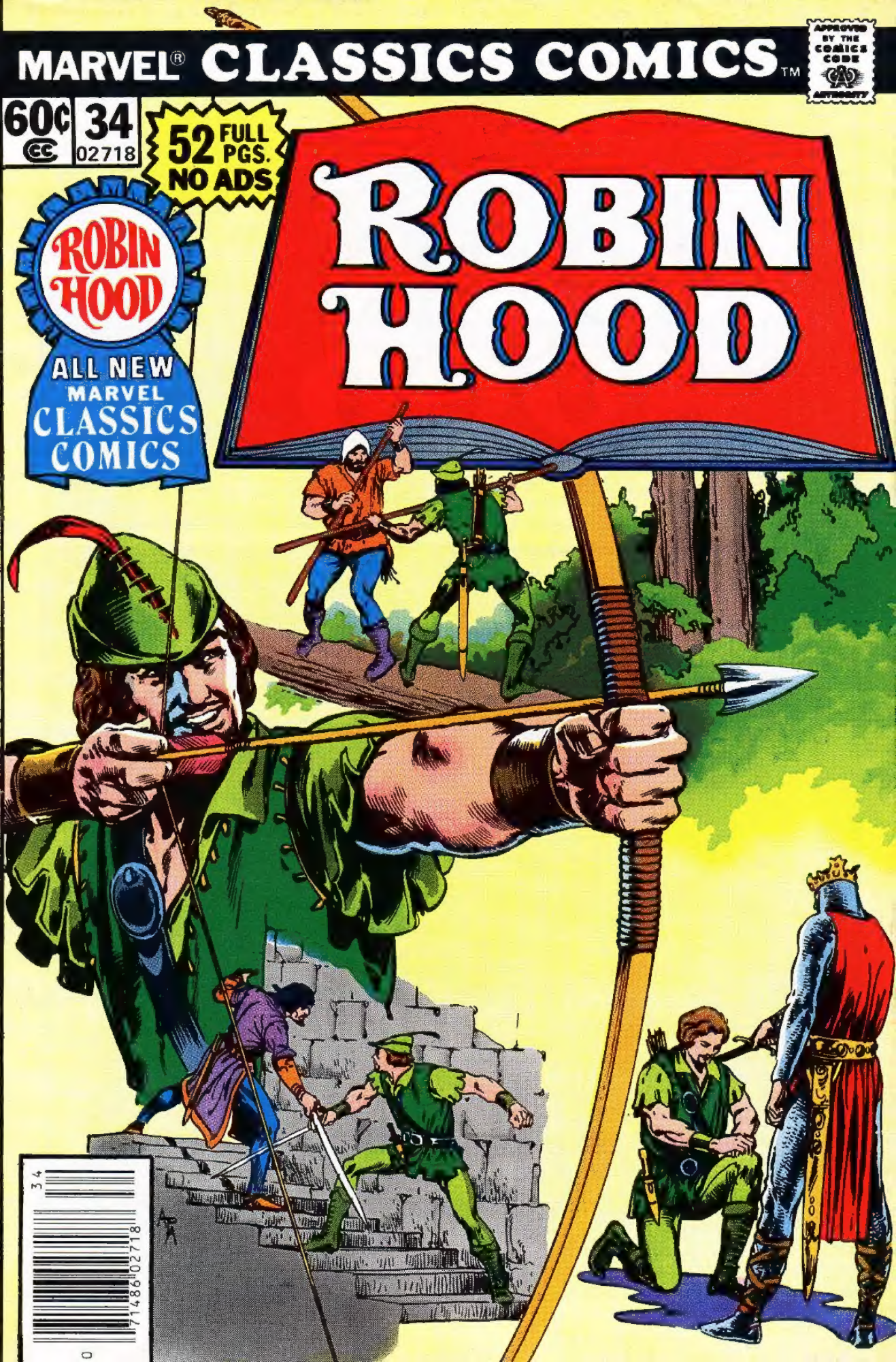
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ROBIN HOOD
ALL NEW MARVEL CLASSICS COMICS
ROBIN HOOD

STAN LEE presents

ROBIN HOOD

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robin Hood is one of the great mystery men of English literature. Hundreds of stories and songs were composed about him—and yet no one is sure exactly who he was, or even if he really existed.

In the fourteenth century, a Robin Hood craze swept England. Towns, hills, and rivers were named after him, and many a priest complained that folk would rather read Robin Hood than the Bible. Robin Hood plays were popular at festivals because he represented such good things—courage, adventure, and loyalty to friends. Everyone had a different theory of what drove Robin to Sherwood Forest. Some said that when a youth, Robin Hood had murdered a man in a fit of anger and fled to the forest. Others thought he was a rebel against the king, although no one was sure what king. He had at least two known graves. One was in the family graveyard of the royal House of Huntingdon. The other was by the side of a road, for, according to one ancient manuscript, Robin had been murdered by his own cousin, "the treacherous nun of Kirklees," who "letting him bleed to death, buried him under a great stone by the highway's side."

England then was ripe for a hero. The King ruled from London, the lords from their castles, the thieves from the forests, and the poor peasants slaved from dawn to dusk in the fields. But these old ways were beginning to change, for the Black Death had come to England.

The poor were no longer a dime a dozen, and crops rotted in the fields because there weren't enough people to harvest them. When the taxes were raised yet again, the serfs, weak from famine and disease, but aware of their new-found power, rebelled.

Robin Hood was the hero of these rebels. While they slaved all their lives on one piece of land, he roamed free in the forests. While the poor were robbed by taxes that were given to the rich, Robin Hood robbed the rich and gave to the poor. Robin Hood obeyed no foolish and oppressive laws—only those of his head and his heart. What better hero for men who simply wanted to stand on their own two feet?

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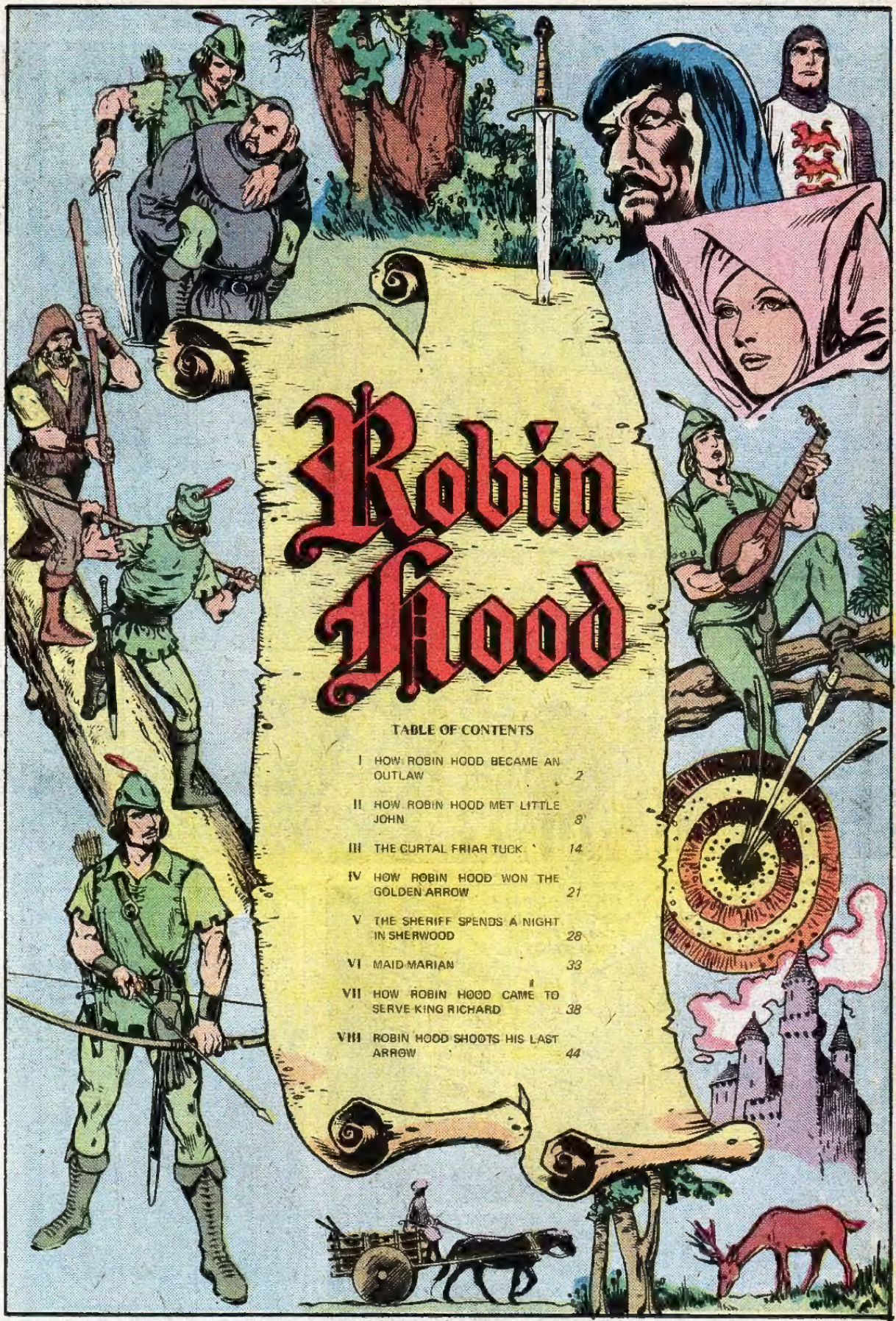
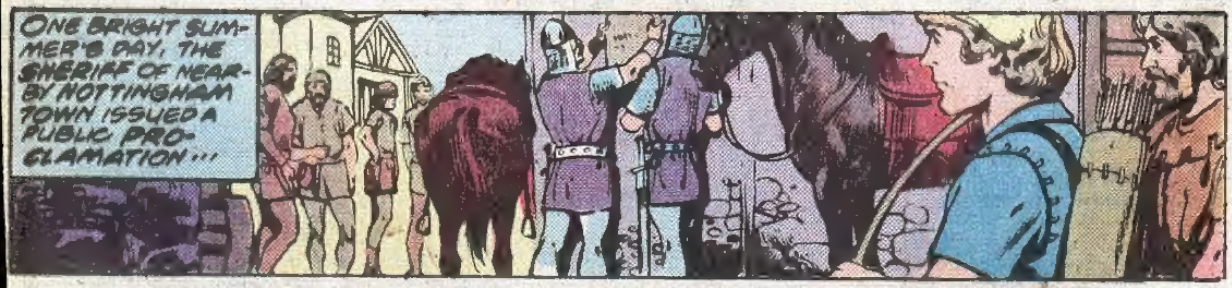
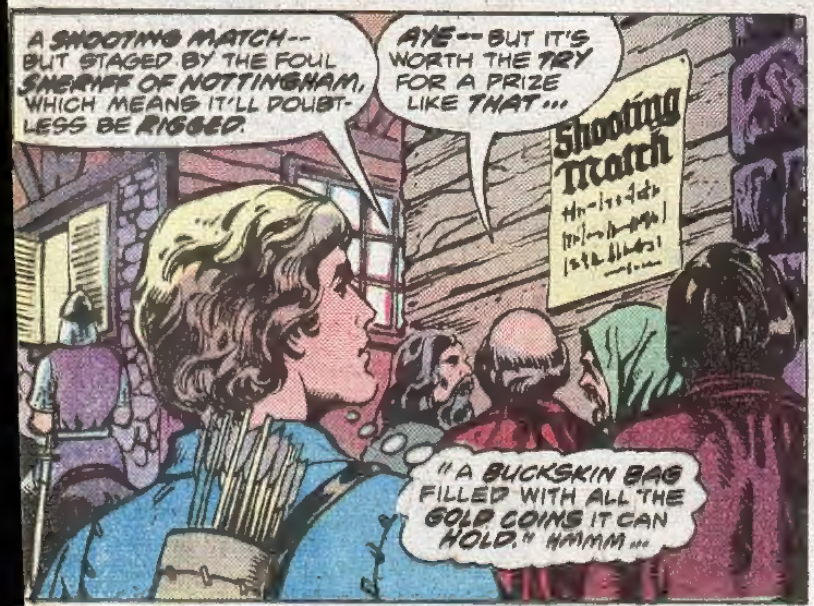


TABLE OF CONTENTS

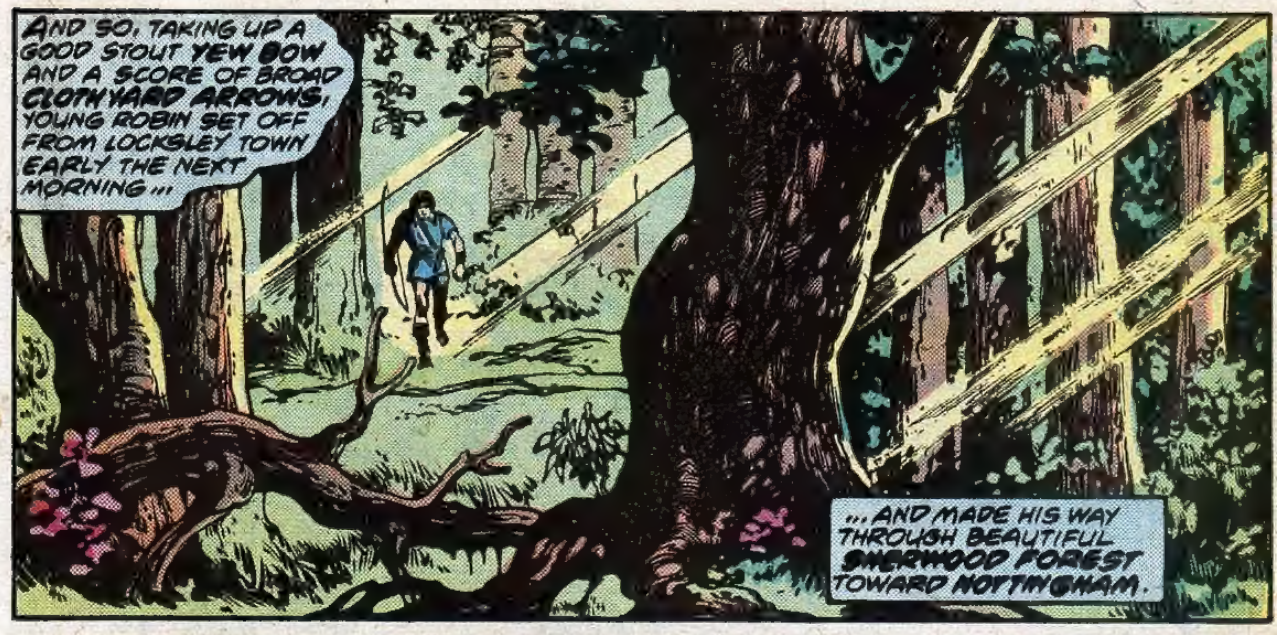
I	HOW ROBIN HOOD BECAME AN OUTLAW	2
II	HOW ROBIN HOOD MET LITTLE JOHN	8
III	THE CURTAL FRIAR TUCK	14
IV	HOW ROBIN HOOD WON THE GOLDEN ARROW	21
V	THE SHERIFF SPENDS A NIGHT IN SHERWOOD	28
VI	MAID MARIAN	33
VII	HOW ROBIN HOOD CAME TO SERVE KING RICHARD	38
VIII	ROBIN HOOD SHOOTS HIS LAST ARROW	44

I: HOW ROBIN HOOD BECAME AN OUTLAW!
LONG AGO, IN THE DAYS OF OLD, WHEN KING HENRY THE SECOND RULED MERRY ENGLAND, THERE LIVED A LAD IN LOCKSLEY TOWN CALLED ROBIN HOOD.
ALTHOUGH BUT EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD, HE WAS TALL AND EXTREMELY STRONG --A COMELY LAD IN EVERY WAY. AND NO YEOMAN IN ALL THE LAND COULD SHOOT A GRAY GOOSE ARROW WITH GREATER SKILL...


ONE BRIGHT SUMMER'S DAY, THE SHERIFF OF NEARBY NOTTINGHAM TOWN ISSUED A PUBLIC PROCLAMATION...


A SHOOTING MATCH-- BUT STAGED BY THE FOUL SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM, WHICH MEANS IT'LL DOUBTLESS BE RIGGED.
AYE-- BUT IT'S WORTH THE TRY FOR A PRIZE LIKE THAT...
Shooting Match
"A BUCKSKIN BAG FILLED WITH ALL THE GOLD COINS IT CAN HOLD." HMMM...

DEARLY WOULD I LOVE TO DRAW A STRING FOR THIS FAT PURSE. I THINK I SHALL ATTEND THE SHERIFF'S SHOOTING MATCH...


AND SO, TAKING UP A GOOD STOUT YEW BOW AND A SCORE OF BROAD CLOTH YARD ARROWS, YOUNG ROBIN SET OFF FROM LOCKSLEY TOWN EARLY THE NEXT MORNING...
...AND MADE HIS WAY THROUGH BEAUTIFUL SHERWOOD FOREST TOWARD NOTTINGHAM.

IT WAS EARLY DAWN IN THE MONTH OF JUNE, WHEN EVERYTHING GLOWED GREEN IN THE DEEP SHADE OF SHERWOOD, AND WHEN THE MEADOWS WERE BRIGHTLY FLOWERED, AND THE BIRDS SANG.
THE KING'S FORESTERS MUST HAVE BEEN ALERTED BY ROBIN'S MERRY WHISTLE, OR PERHAPS THE SOUND OF HIS BRISK AND JAUNTY PACE...

THE WOODSMEN DECIDED TO HAVE SOME SPORT...
WELL, LITTLE LAD, WHERE ARE YOU BOUND WITH YOUR ONE-PENNY BOW AND YOUR PUNY SHAFTS?

MY BOW AND ARROWS ARE AS GOOD AS YOURS --AND BETTER, I DARE SAY!
I'M ON MY WAY TO NOTTINGHAM TO PROVE IT --IN THE SHERIFF'S MATCH FOR THE PURSE OF GOLD.

HO! LISTEN TO HIM! THE NOTTINGHAM MATCH IS FOR MEN, NOT BOYS!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
I'LL WAGER A SILVER STERLING THAT THIS "BOY" CAN PUT AN ARROW CLOSER TO THE BULLSEYE AT A HUNDRED YARDS THAN ANY OF YOU "MEN"!

THE LAUGHTER STOPPED...
SAFE ENOUGH TO BOAST, BOY... WHEN YOU KNOW THERE IS NO TARGET HERE TO MAKE GOOD YOUR WAGER...
THERE--LOOK!
YONDER IS A HERD OF DEER--TWICE A HUNDRED YARDS DISTANT.
I'LL BET MY SHILLING THAT I CAN FAIRLY HIT THE LARGEST STAG.
DONE.
PERHAPS THE FORESTERS BELIEVED THAT NO MAN COULD POSSIBLY MAKE SUCH A SHOT...
TWUNG
FWZZZZ
CHUTCH
HITHUGH!
IF SO, THEY WERE GRIEVOUSLY WRONG.
HAH! I HAVE WON THE BET!
NAY... YOU HAVE WON THE PENALTIES OF THE FOREST LAWS. YON WAS ONE OF THE KING'S ROYAL HARTS... AND YOU HAVE SLAIN IT.
AND, IF NOT, THEN THEY WERE CRUEL MEN, INDEED...
NOW, BOY, FOR THE CRIME OF KILLING ONE OF THE KING'S DEER, YOU WILL GO TO NOTTINGHAM JAIL TO ROT FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS!
...FOR THEY HAD TRICKED YOUNG ROBIN INTO BECOMING AN OUTLAW.

LET'S FLAY THE DEAD STAG--AND BIND THE KNAVE UP IN THE STINKING HIDE! THAT'S THE WAY SUCH A ROGUE SHOULD BE CARRIED IN!
NAY, MEN! REMEMBER HE IS BUT A BOY--AND WE ANGERED HIM INTO COMMITTING THE CRIME...
GO ON YOUR WAY, SON--BUT KEEP IN MIND THAT EVERY DEER IN THIS FOREST BELONGS TO THE KING.
ROBIN TURNED AND BEGAN WALKING QUICKLY, QUITE WILLING TO LET THE MATTER REST WHERE IT WAS...
FWZZZ
NO!!
...BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER WHO WAS NOT.
YOU SAID I WAS NOT AN ARCHER FIT FOR YOUR COMPANY...
TWUNG
...BUT YOU'LL NEVER SAY SO AGAIN!
NONE OF YOU!

NONE... SAVE ONE...

...THE ONLY GOOD MAN AMONG YOU.

HE HAD SHOT ONE OF THE KING'S DEER, HAD KILLED THE KING'S MEN.

ROBIN SPUN AND BOLTED INTO THE GREENWOOD. HE WAS OUT OF HIS WITS BY NOW, UNABLE TO BELIEVE WHAT HAD JUST HAPPENED, RACING FASTER THAN ONE OF THE KING'S STAGS...

...AND NOT EVEN REALIZING THAT HIS FEET WERE MOVING.

HE WAS AN OUTLAW--FOR THE REST OF HIS LONG OR SHORT LIFE. AND IT HAD ALL HAPPENED SO FAST, LIKE A BLUR, FLASHING, RACING, RUNNING AND RUNNING FASTER, FASTER, FASTER STILL --

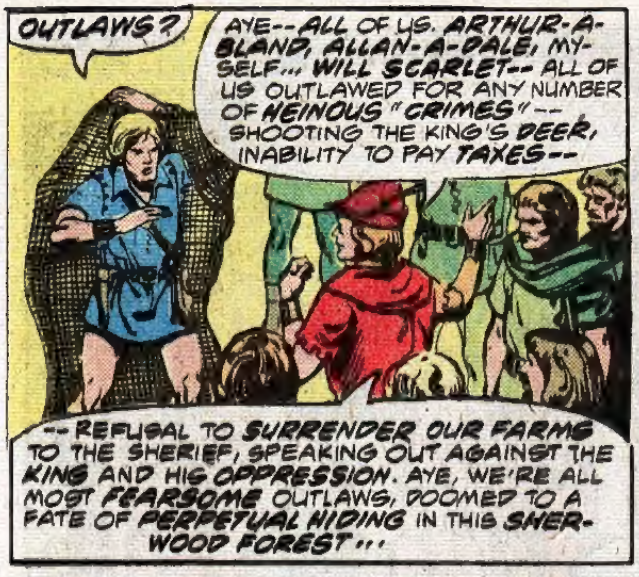
--STRAIGHT INTO THE NET.

THEY DROPPED FROM THE TREES, THEN, EASILY A SCORE OF THEM, RANGY WOODSMEN WHO CLEARLY KNEW THEIR TRADE...

AND YET, THEY WERE NOT THE KING'S FORESTERS...

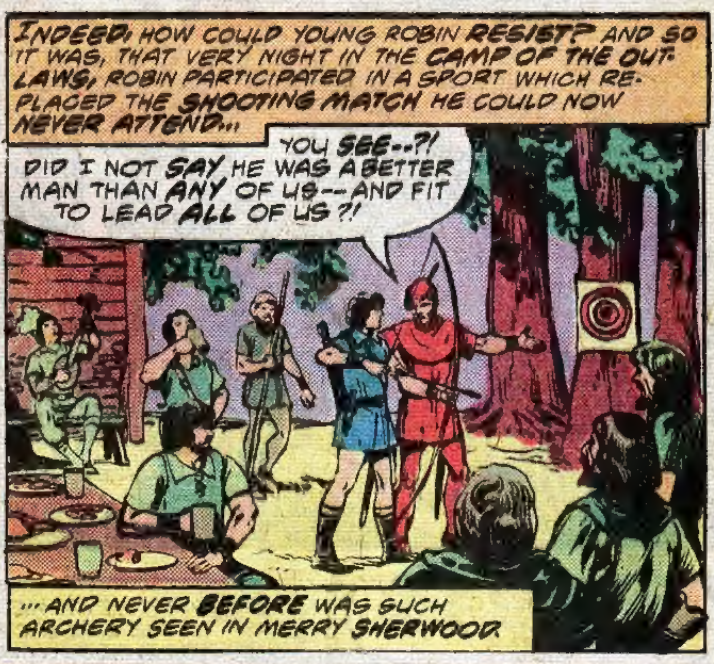
WHO...WHO ARE YOU...?

OUTLAWS.


OUTLAWS?
AYE--ALL OF US. ARTHUR-A-BLAND, ALLAN-A-DALE, MYSELF... WILL SCARLET-- ALL OF US OUTLAWED FOR ANY NUMBER OF HEINOUS "CRIMES"-- SHOOTING THE KING'S DEER, INABILITY TO PAY TAXES--
--REFUSAL TO SURRENDER OUR FARMS TO THE SHERIEF, SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE KING AND HIS OPPRESSION. AYE, WE'RE ALL MOST FEARSOME OUTLAWS, DOOMED TO A FATE OF PERPETUAL HIDING IN THIS SHERWOOD FOREST...

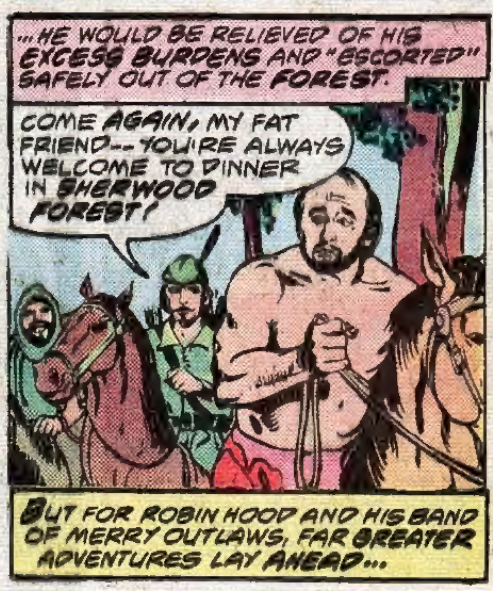
...AND BLESSED WITH A LIFE OF ADVENTURE AND CONSTANT JOY! OUTLAWS-- JUST LIKE YOU, FRIEND. WELCOME TO OUR MERRY BAND!
BUT KNOW THAT WE ARE ALSO A BAND OF OUTLAWS WHO, JUST LAST NIGHT, SOUGHT TO CHOOSE A LEADER. AND AFTER WHAT I JUST SAW BACK THERE WITH THE KING'S MEN, THAT CHOICE IS--

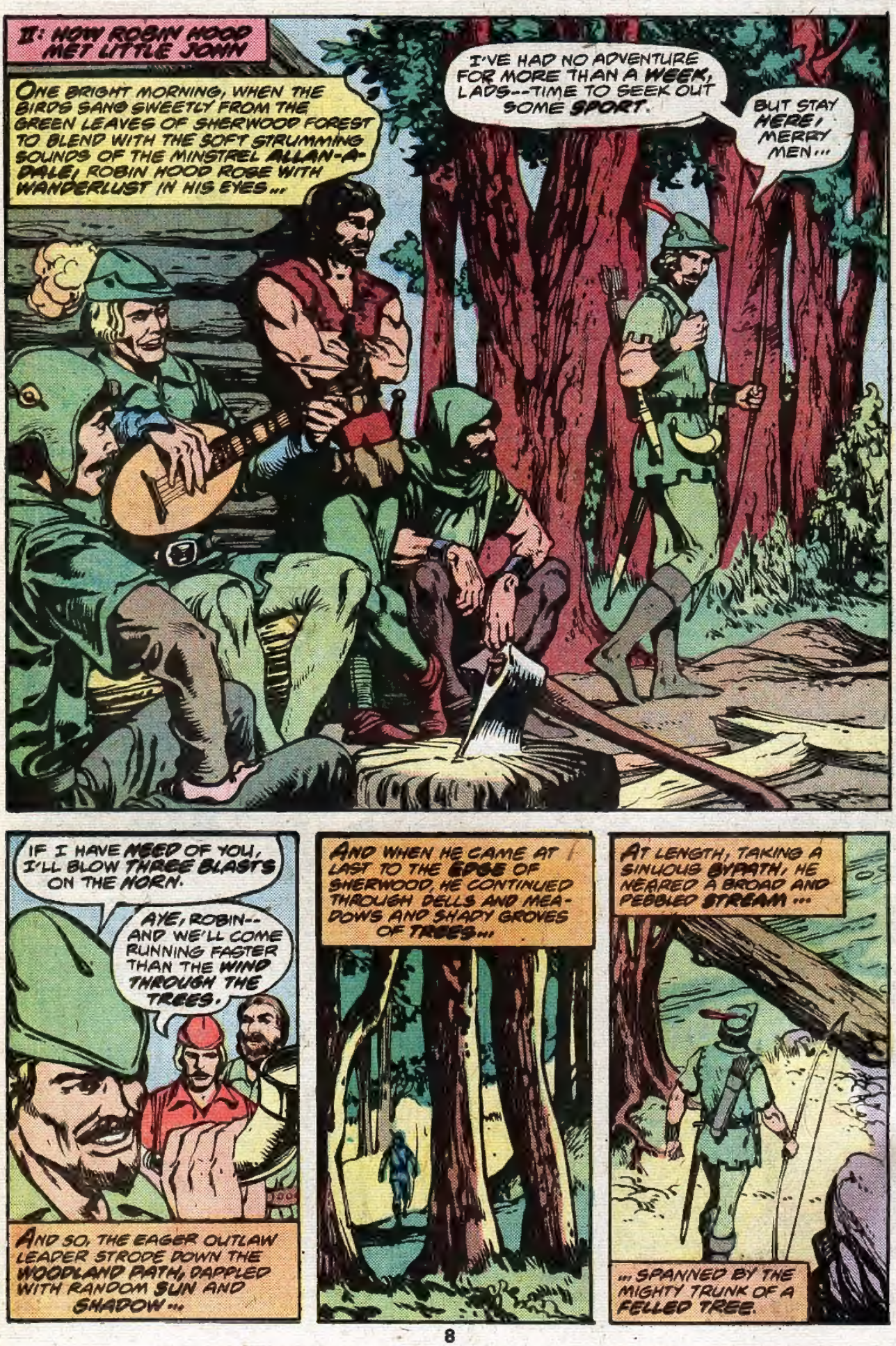
--YOU!
ME? BUT... WELL, AS YOUR LEADER... WHAT WOULD I DO?
WHY, YOU'D VOW TO DO WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS DONE --ROB FROM THE RICH NORMAN KNIGHTS AND BARONS AND PRIESTS, AND GIVE OUR SPOILS TO THE SAXON POOR! WHAT ELSE--?

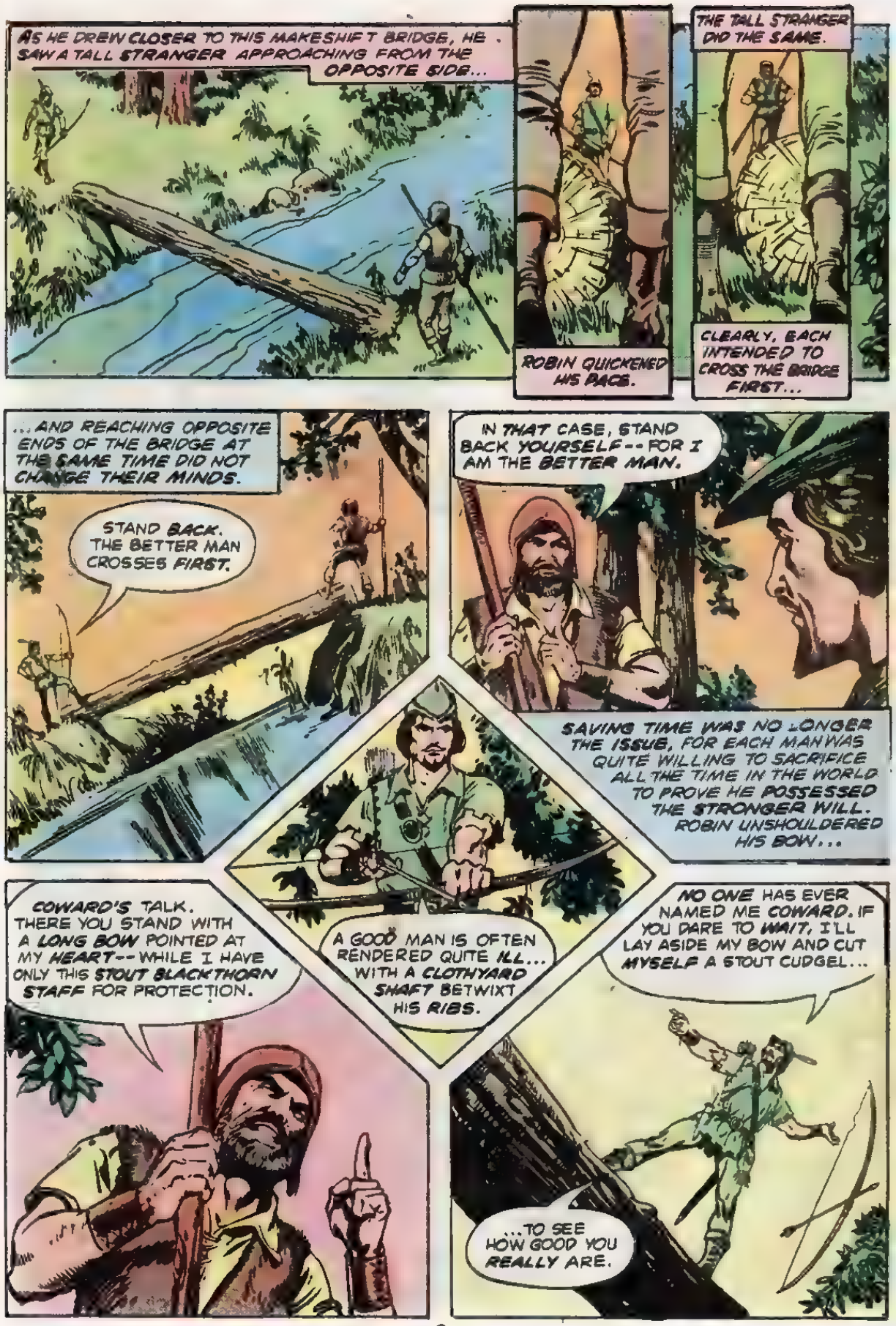

INDEED, HOW COULD YOUNG ROBIN RESIST? AND SO IT WAS, THAT VERY NIGHT IN THE CAMP OF THE OUTLAWS, ROBIN PARTICIPATED IN A SPORT WHICH REPLACED THE SHOOTING MATCH HE COULD NOW NEVER ATTEND...
YOU SEE--?! DID I NOT SAY HE WAS A BETTER MAN THAN ANY OF US--AND FIT TO LEAD ALL OF US?!
...AND NEVER BEFORE WAS SUCH ARCHERY SEEN IN MERRY SHERWOOD.

ROBIN PROVED TO BE A FINE LEADER AND THERE WERE MANY MORE FEAST IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED. OFTEN THEY HAD A GUEST--A RICH BARON OR MERCHANT WHOM THEY SURPRISED ON A DARK FOREST PATH...
AT FIRST THE GUEST WOULD ENJOY HIMSELF IMMENSELY...

BUT AFTER THE FEASTING AND MERRY-MAKING WERE DONE...
GULP!


...HE WOULD BE RELIEVED OF HIS EXCESS BURDENS AND "ESCORTED" SAFELY OUT OF THE FOREST.
COME AGAIN, MY FAT FRIEND--YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME TO DINNER IN SHERWOOD FOREST!
BUT FOR ROBIN HOOD AND HIS BAND OF MERRY OUTLAWS, FAR GREATER ADVENTURES LAY AHEAD...


II: HOW ROBIN HOOD MET LITTLE JOHN
ONE BRIGHT MORNING, WHEN THE BIRDS SANG SWEETLY FROM THE GREEN LEAVES OF SHERWOOD FOREST TO BLEND WITH THE SOFT STRUMMING SOUNDS OF THE MINSTREL ALLAN-A-DALE, ROBIN HOOD ROSE WITH WANDERLUST IN HIS EYES...
I'VE HAD NO ADVENTURE FOR MORE THAN A WEEK, LADS--TIME TO SEEK OUT SOME SPORT.
BUT STAY HERE, MERRY MEN...
IF I HAVE NEED OF YOU, I'LL BLOW THREE BLASTS ON THE HORN.
AYE, ROBIN--AND WE'LL COME RUNNING FASTER THAN THE WIND THROUGH THE TREES.
AND SO, THE EAGER OUTLAW LEADER STRODE DOWN THE WOODLAND PATH, DAPPLED WITH RANDOM SUN AND SHADOW...
AND WHEN HE CAME AT LAST TO THE EDGE OF SHERWOOD, HE CONTINUED THROUGH DELLS AND MEADOWS AND SHADY GROVES OF TREES...
AT LENGTH, TAKING A SINUOUS BYPATH, HE NEARED A BROAD AND PEBBLED STREAM...
...SPANNED BY THE MIGHTY TRUNK OF A FELLED TREE.


AS HE DREW CLOSER TO THIS MAKESHIFT BRIDGE, HE SAW A TALL STRANGER APPROACHING FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE...
ROBIN QUICKENED HIS PACE.
THE TALL STRANGER DID THE SAME.
CLEARLY, EACH INTENDED TO CROSS THE BRIDGE FIRST...
...AND REACHING OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE BRIDGE AT THE SAME TIME DID NOT CHANGE THEIR MINDS.
STAND BACK. THE BETTER MAN CROSSES FIRST.
IN THAT CASE, STAND BACK YOURSELF -- FOR I AM THE BETTER MAN.
SAVING TIME WAS NO LONGER THE ISSUE, FOR EACH MAN WAS QUITE WILLING TO SACRIFICE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD TO PROVE HE POSSESSED THE STRONGER WILL. ROBIN UNSHOULDERED HIS BOW...
A GOOD MAN IS OFTEN RENDERED QUITE ILL... WITH A CLOTHYARD SHAFT BETWIXT HIS RIBS.
COWARD'S TALK. THERE YOU STAND WITH A LONG BOW POINTED AT MY HEART -- WHILE I HAVE ONLY THIS STOUT BLACKTHORN STAFF FOR PROTECTION.
NO ONE HAS EVER NAMED ME COWARD. IF YOU DARE TO WAIT, I'LL LAY ASIDE MY BOW AND CUT MYSELF A STOUT CUDGEL...
...TO SEE HOW GOOD YOU REALLY ARE.

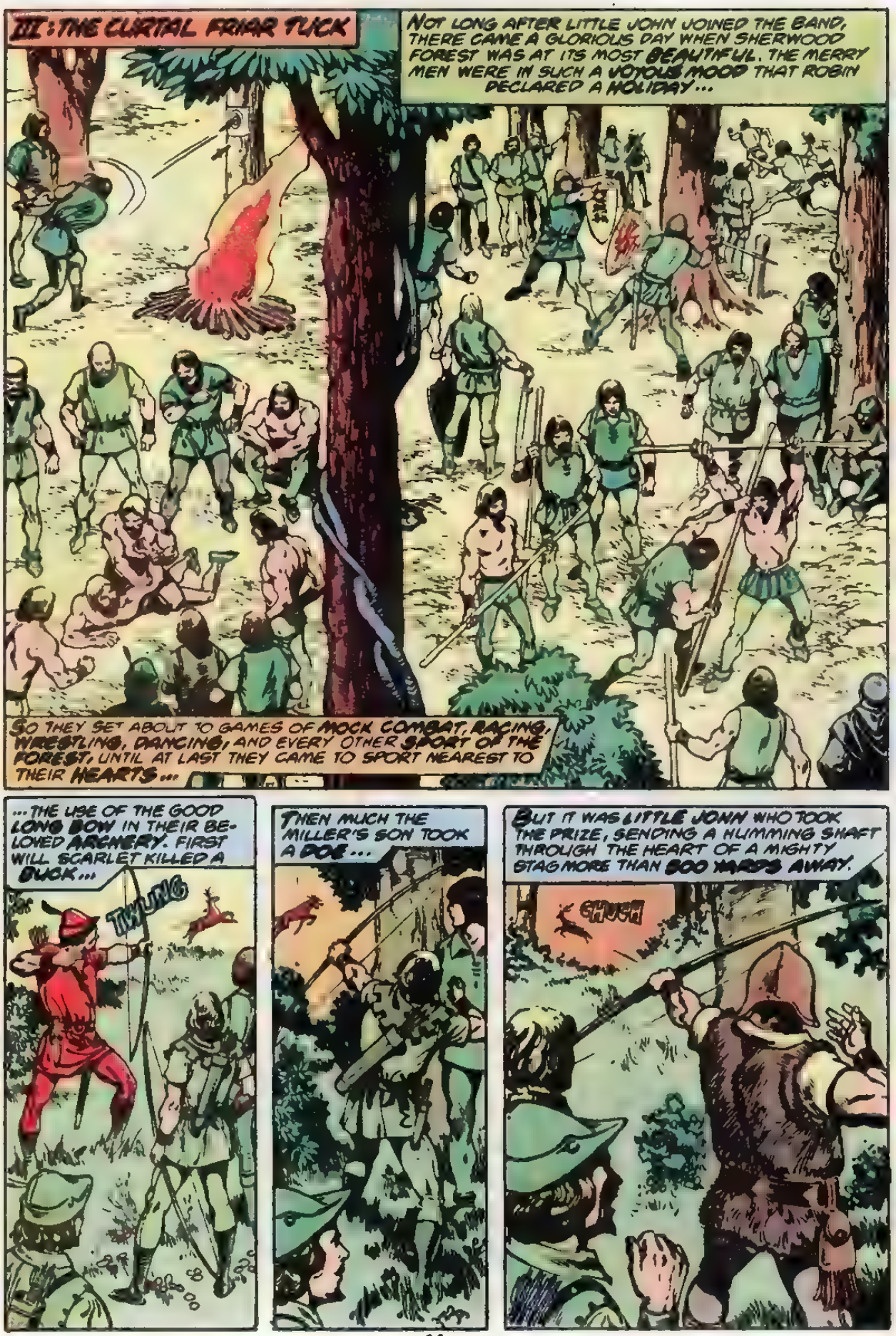
I'LL WAIT--BUT CUT YOURSELF A STRONG ONE
YOU'LL NEED IT TO KEEP ME FROM CRACKING YOUR PATE WIDE OPEN.
THAT, STRANGER, REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
TRIMMING THE STEMS FROM THE OAK SAPLING HE HAD CUT, ROBIN RETURNED TO HIS END OF THE BRIDGE AND SIZED UP HIS OPPONENT. SURELY HE HAD NEVER SEEN A BIGGER OR STRONGER MAN...
YOU'RE RATHER LARGE, ARE YOU NOT? STILL, I THINK I SHALL TAN YOUR HIDE RIGHT MERRILY, MY GOOD FELLOW.
NOW . HERE'S MY CUDGEL AND HERE AM I, READY TO TEACH YOU A STIFF LESSON.
WE SHALL FIGHT UNTIL ONE OR THE OTHER OF US IS WET.
A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART -- EVEN IF YOU AREN'T MUCH BIGGER THAN MY HEART.

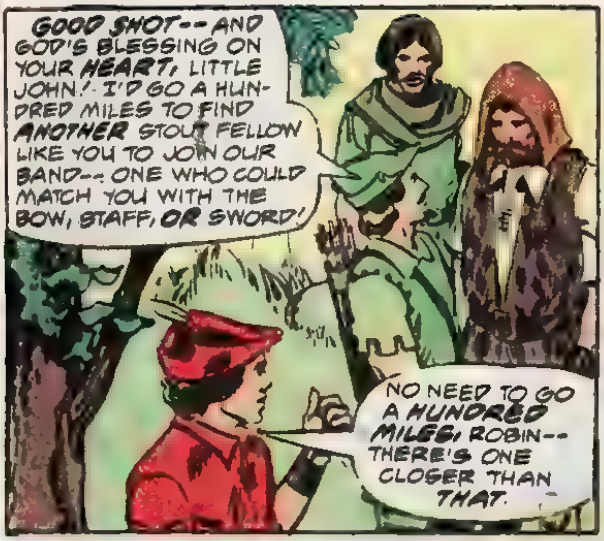
THEN DID THESE TWO MEET EACH OTHER AT THE CENTER OF THEIR NARROW BRIDGE...
...AND NEVER DID KING ARTHUR'S KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE ENGAGE IN A STOUTER FIGHT THAN THE ONE WHICH WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN...

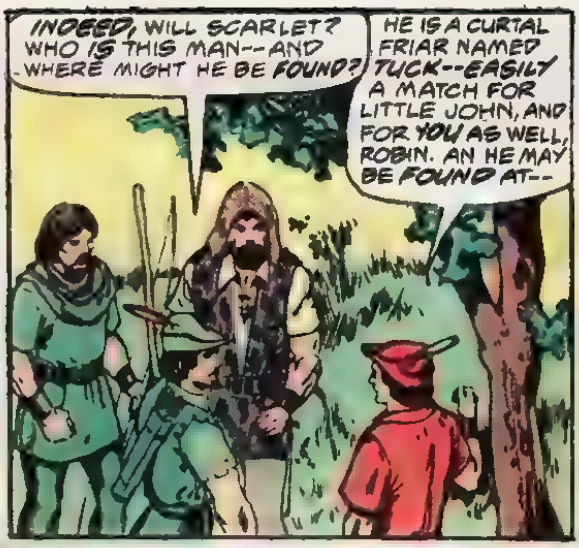
FIRST, ROBIN MADE A FEINT...
HAH!
...SWIFTLY CONVERTING IT INTO A BLOW THAT WOULD HAVE ENDED THE FIGHT THEN AND THERE...
...HAD IT LANDED.
BWAKK
KRAK
THEN IT WAS THE STRANGER'S TURN TO DELIVER A BLOW...
...AND ROBIN'S TURN TO BLOCK IT.
SO THEY STOOD FOR A GOOD LONG HOUR, SWINGING THEIR MIGHTY CUDGELS, TRADING BLOW FOR BLOW...
...MANY OF WHICH THEY FENDED OFF...
CHUD
...SOME OF WHICH THEY TOOK IN THE RIBS...
...AND OTHERS OF WHICH THEY BLOCKED ONLY WITH THEIR SHOULDERS...
VHNH!
WAP
...UNTIL THEIR MUSCLES BECAME KNOTS OF PAIN, AND THEIR HARD BODIES ACHED FROM HEAD TO TOE.
BUT NEITHER MAN RETREATED A SINGLE STEP -- NOR DID THEY EVEN THINK OF CRYING, "ENOUGH"...
...OR FALLING OFF THE BRIDGE.

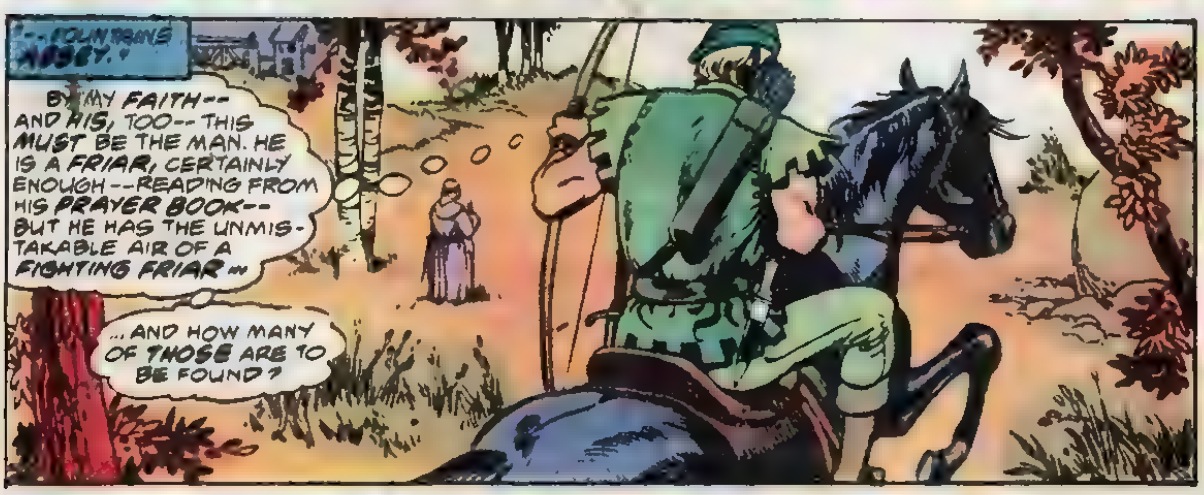
NOW AND THEN, ONE WAS FORCED TO REST -- AND THE OTHER WAS GLAD FOR IT IN ALL HIS LIFE, EACH MAN HAD NEVER BEFORE SEEN SUCH SKILL WITH THE QUARTER-STAFF...
AT LAST, ROBIN GAVE THE STRANGER A BLOW SO FORCEFUL THAT THE DUST FLEW FROM HIS VEST...
UFFF!
CHUFF!
...AND DROVE HIM WITHIN A TEETERING INCH OF A TUMBLING OFF THE BRIDGE.
HA-HAH!
BUT AT LAST THE LAST MOMENT THE STRANGER RECOVERED HIMSELF...
KROK
...MIRACULOUSLY SO.
--RAMMING HIM HEAD OVER HEELS OFF THE BRIDGE.
NOW, MY GOOD MAN, WHAT ARE YOU--?
REELING WITH DIZZINESS, ROBIN COMPLETELY LOST HIS TEMPER AND SWUNG WITH ALL HIS MIGHT...
WHOOF
THE STRANGER FELL INTO A CROUCH...
...AND ROSE FROM THAT CROUCH STRAIGHT INTO ROBIN'S UNPROTECTED RIBS --
PLASH

VERY WET--AND MY HEAD IS HUMMING LIKE A HIVE OF BEES!
WELL DONE, STOUT FELLOW--NOW GIVE ME A HAND.
HA HA HA
WHEN HE HAD REGAINED THE BANK WITH THE STRANGER'S HELP, ROBIN SENT THREE LUSTY BLASTS FROM HIS HORN ECHOING DOWN THE FOREST PATHS...
TURAWW TURAW TURAWW
NEVER HAS ANY MAN 'TWIXT HERE AND CANTERBURY TOWN DUSTED MY RIBS AS MERRILY AS YOU HAVE DONE THIS DAY.
AND YOU, I MUST ADMIT--
--TOOK YOUR CUDGELING LIKE A BRAVE AND TRUE YEOMAN.
AND SO THE TWO LAUGHED, RECOUNTING THE EPIC BATTLE IN EVERY DETAIL...UNTIL TEN OF ROBIN'S MERRY MEN BURST FROM THE FOREST.
YOU...YOU'RE SOAKED TO THE SKIN! BUT...WHAT HAPPENED--?
THIS RATHER LARGE FELLOW HERE TUMBLED ME INTO THE DRINK--AND GAVE ME A SOUND DRUBBING BESIDES.
THEN HE SHALL HAVE A SOUND DUCKING AND DRUBBING HIMSELF. HAVE AT HIM, LADS!
NOT SO FAST, MY FRIENDS. HE'S A GOOD MAN AND DESERVES NO HARM.
I ASKED FOR MY BATH.
NOW, GOOD FELLOW, MEN CALL ME ROBIN HOOD. WILL YOU STAY WITH ME AND JOIN MY BAND?
ROBIN..HOOD? WELL, HAD I KNOWN YOU WERE ME, I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO QUICK TO CHALLENGE YOU. BUT YES, I'LL MERRILY STAY WITH THE LEADER OF THE SAXON FREEMEN.
THEN I'VE GAINED A GOOD MAN THIS DAY. WHAT NAME DO YOU GO BY?
I AM CALLED JOHN LITTLE.
JOHN LITTLE--? NAY, A MAN OF YOUR SIZE--
--CAN ONLY BE CALLED.. LITTLE JOHN!
HA HA
HA HA
SO IT WAS THAT JOHN LITTLE GOT HIS NAME TURNED AROUND, ROBIN HOOD GOT MORE SPORT THAN HE BARGAINED FOR, AND SHERWOOD FOREST'S BAND OF OUTLAWS GOT ONE OF ITS BEST MEN.


III: THE CURTAL FRIAR TUCK
NOT LONG AFTER LITTLE JOHN JOINED THE BAND, THERE CAME A GLORIOUS DAY WHEN SHERWOOD FOREST WAS AT ITS MOST BEAUTIFUL. THE MERRY MEN WERE IN SUCH A VOYOUS MOOD THAT ROBIN DECLARED A HOLIDAY...
SO THEY SET ABOUT TO GAMES OF MOCK COMBAT, RACING, WRESTLING, DANCING, AND EVERY OTHER SPORT OF THE FOREST, UNTIL AT LAST THEY CAME TO SPORT NEAREST TO THEIR HEARTS...
...THE USE OF THE GOOD LONG BOW IN THEIR BELOVED ARCHERY. FIRST WILL SCARLET KILLED A BUCK...
TWANG
THEN MUCH THE MILLER'S SON TOOK A DOE...
BUT IT WAS LITTLE JOHN WHO TOOK THE PRIZE, SENDING A HUMMING SHAFT THROUGH THE HEART OF A MIGHTY STAG MORE THAN 300 YARDS AWAY.
SWISH


GOOD SHOT--AND GOD'S BLESSING ON YOUR HEART, LITTLE JOHN! I'D GO A HUNDRED MILES TO FIND ANOTHER STOUT FELLOW LIKE YOU TO JOIN OUR BAND--ONE WHO COULD MATCH YOU WITH THE BOW, STAFF, OR SWORD!
NO NEED TO GO A HUNDRED MILES, ROBIN--THERE'S ONE CLOSER THAN THAT.


INDEED, WILL SCARLET? WHO IS THIS MAN--AND WHERE MIGHT HE BE FOUND?
HE IS A CURTAL FRIAR NAMED TUCK--EASILY A MATCH FOR LITTLE JOHN, AND FOR YOU AS WELL, ROBIN. AN HE MAY BE FOUND AT--


--FOUNTAINS ABBEY.
BY MY FAITH--AND HIS, TOO--THIS MUST BE THE MAN. HE IS A FRIAR, CERTAINLY ENOUGH--READING FROM HIS PRAYER BOOK--BUT HE HAS THE UNMISTAKABLE AIR OF A FIGHTING FRIAR--
...AND HOW MANY OF THOSE ARE TO BE FOUND?

TRUE ENOUGH, THE FRIAR MADE FOR AN ALMOST COMICAL SIGHT, DRESSED AS A WARRIOR, YET ENGROSSED IN THE PEACEFUL WORDS OF GOD...
COMPLETELY ENGROSSED

AHEM.
EH--?

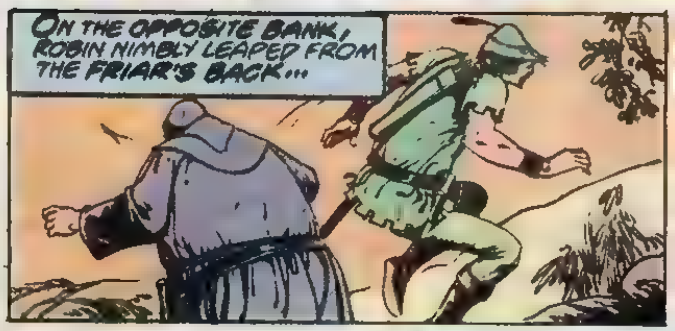
PUT DOWN THE BOW AND ARROW, SON. ROBBERY IS USELESS HERE. A CURTAL FRIAR IS A MAN VOWED TO POVERTY. AND IF YOUR PURPOSE IS NOT ROBBERY, WHY SHOULD YOU SEEK TO KILL A MAN YOU'VE NEVER EVEN MET BEFORE?
NAY, I SEEK NEITHER LIFE NOR MONEY, FRIAR. I ONLY WISH TO HAVE YOUR AID...

YOU SEE, I MUST FORD THIS STREAM, AND I NOTICE THE WATER RUNS DEEP AFTER RAIN. THEREFORE YOU WILL TAKE ME ON YOUR BACK AND CARRY ME OVER.
ONE OF THOSE KIND, ARE YOU? VERY WELL--LET ME LAY DOWN MY MISSAL.
ROBIN NOTED THAT THE FRIAR'S VOICE WAS MUCH LIKE THE BELLOW OF A BULL...

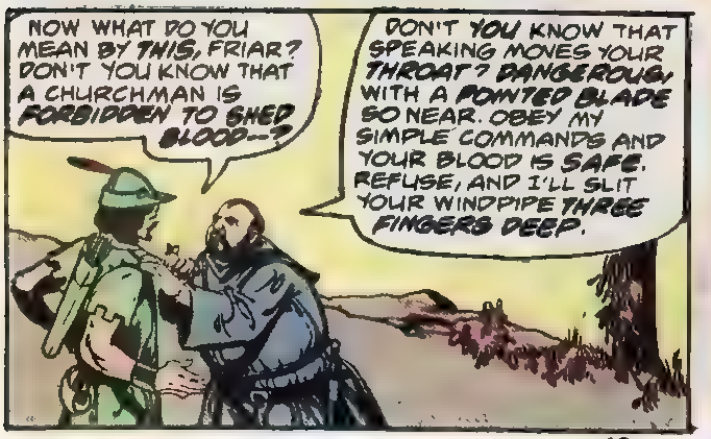
...BUT HE NEARLY LAUGHED, SO WRY AND COMICAL WAS THE CHURCHMAN'S ATTITUDE.

ONWARD, MY FAITHFUL MOUNT!

THE FRIAR SAID NOTHING MORE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH ROBIN GOADED HIM...
CAREFUL NOW--MIND YOU DON'T GET MY FEET WET!
HA HA HA HA


ON THE OPPOSITE BANK, ROBIN NIMBLY LEAPED FROM THE FRIAR'S BACK...

...BUT WHEN HE TURNED--
WHY, THANK Y--
OOH


NOW WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THIS, FRIAR? DON'T YOU KNOW THAT A CHURCHMAN IS FORBIDDEN TO SHED BLOOD--?
DON'T YOU KNOW THAT SPEAKING MOVES YOUR THROAT? DANGEROUS, WITH A POINTED BLADE SO NEAR. OBEY MY SIMPLE COMMANDS AND YOUR BLOOD IS SAFE. REFUSE, AND I'LL SLIT YOUR WINDPIPE THREE FINGERS DEEP.

AND WHAT ARE YOUR SIMPLE COMMANDS?
AS YOU KNOW, I'VE LEFT MY MISSAL ON THE OTHER SIDE. LEND THY AID, I PRAY THEE, TO RECOVER IT.

THIS WAS A BITTER PILL FOR ROBIN TO SWALLOW. TRUE, HE HAD TO REGAIN HIS HORSE, AND HE PLANNED TO RECROSS THE STREAM ON HIS OWN, BUT... WELL, IT WASN'T GETTING WET THAT HE MINDED...
THE FRIAR WAS AWE-SOMELY HEAVY--HEAVIER THAN ANY MAN HAD A RIGHT TO BE.
THE STONES ON THE BOTTOM OF THE STREAM WERE SLIPPERY.
FASTER, MY "FAITHFUL MOUNT"!
BUT MOST OF ALL, THE HUMILIATION WAS ABSOLUTELY MISERABLE!
WHAT SORT OF BEARING IS THIS FOR A PRIZE STEED? NOT SO CLOSE TO THE WATER!
ALL IN ALL, NOT A BAD RIDE, THOUGH IT WAS A BIT--
--THE PILL WAS SIMPLY TOO BITTER...
--BUMPY?
WHAP!
...AND IT STUCK IN ROBIN'S CRAW.
NOW, FRIAR, I THINK THE GAME HAS TURNED MY WAY AGAIN--AND I AM STILL IN A MIND TO REACH THE FARTHER SHORE... UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO CLEAVE YOUR BALD NOGGIN IN TWAIN!
NO NEED. IN THIS INSTANCE, I AM CERTAIN ONE HEAD IS BETTER THAN TWO.
AND SO...
FASTER--YOU KNOW THE WAY BY NOW!
WAPT!

THE FRIAR PAUSED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM, AND AT FIRST ROBIN THOUGHT HE WAS SEEKING A BETTER FOOTHOLD...
HA-HA-HAH! WHAT'S WRONG, FRIAR? ARE THE STONES SLIPPERY--?
...BUT SOON LEARNED BETTER.
PLASH
NOW CHOOSE, MY FINE FELLOW, WHETHER YOU WILL SINK OR SWIM!
AND SO SHOUTING, THE CURTAL FRIAR BUSTLED BACK TO HIS OWN SIDE OF THE STREAM...
...WHILE ROBIN WAS WASHED TO THE OTHER SIDE BY THE STRONG CURRENT, MANAGING TO HALT HIMSELF ONLY WITH GREAT EFFORT
HA HA HA HA HA
NOW ROBIN WAS SORELY MAD, AND LOST NO TIME IN FITTING SHAFT TO BOW...
KEEP IT UP, JACK PRIEST--AND I'LL SOON MAKE YOU LAUGH OUT OF THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR FAT MOUTH!
HA HA HA HA
♪ SHOOT ON, SHOOT ON, FINE FELLOW, ♪
SPING!
♪ SHOOT AS THOU HAST BEGUN, ♪
♪ IF THOU SHOOT HERE ALL SUMMER'S DAY, ♪
THY SHAFTS I WILL NOT SHUNNN!
STUNG

HA HA HA
VERY WELL, FAT FRIAR, IF I CAN'T REACH YOU WITH A GOOD GREY-GOOSE SHAFT...
...THEN I'LL SHOW YOU A BLOODY TRICK OR TWO WITH THE LONGSWORD!
ROBIN WAS UPON THE FRIAR IN AN INSTANT, AND THEN BEGAN A LONG, FIERCE, AND OBSTINATE BATTLE...
SKANK
THEY LUNGED PARRIED, SMOTE, WARDED, AND
MIGHT AND MAIN. ALL DAY THEY FOUGHT ON THE BANK...
THE SWORDS FLASHED AND GLITTERED AS THEY WERE SWUNG ON HIGH TO DELIVER MIGHTY STROKES-- STRUCK SPARKS AS THEY MET IN RINGING CLANGOR...
...HALF IN THE WATER...
GHANK
...BOTH CROUCHED IN THE LAPPING STREAM...
GUSH

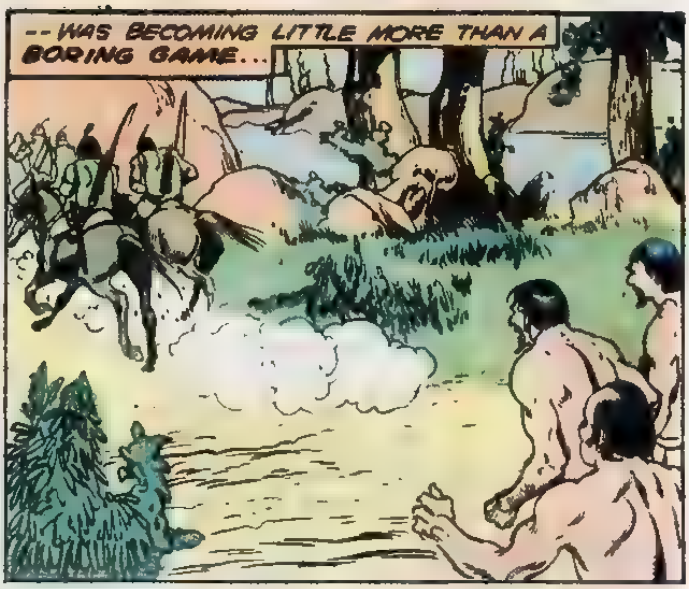
AT LAST, SO WEARY WERE THEY, BOTH, ROBIN RAISED A HAND WITH NO OBJECTION FROM THE FRIAR...
HOLD, FRIEND, I'M CONVINCED YOU'RE THE ONE I SEEK--THE FRIAR NAMED TUCK. BESIDES, WE'LL GET NOWHERE LIKE THIS
GIVE ME BUT A MOMENT..
TURAWN TURAW
NOW FRIAR TUCK... (WHEW BUT I ACHE!) ... MEN CALL ME ... ROBIN HOOD. WOULD YOU CARE TO... (OUCH, A BIT SORE) ... JOIN MY BAND?
I FIGURED YOU MUST BE ROBIN HOOD... AYE... WHO ELSE? I GUESSED IT ABOUT TWO HOURS AGO... HALFWAY THROUGH OUR SPORT. THESE SEVEN YEARS HAVE I KEPT THIS VALE... BEATEN EVERY MAN WHO VENTURED INTO IT AGAINST MY WILL..
SO, ROBIN HOOD... WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG TO ASK ME?
I WAS ENJOYING MYSELF... AND KNEW IT WOULD BE MY LAST CHANCE TO MATCH WEAPONS WITH YOU... FOR IF YOU SAY AYE RIGHT NOW, WE SHALL BE FRIENDS AND COMRADES...
.. AND NEVER AGAIN RAISE A HAND AGAINST THE OTHER..
WELL .. GOD KNOWS I'VE PRAYED FOR THE POOR MORE THAN ENOUGH ... SO PERHAPS IT'S TIME TO START FIGHTING FOR THEM ...
I'LL SAY ...AYE
AND SO DID FRIAR TUCK COME TO SHARE IN MANY A SONG AND STORY IN SHERWOOD.

IX: HOW ROBIN HOOD WON THE GOLDEN ARROW

IT WAS A BRIGHT CLEAR SUMMER'S DAY. (LIKE SO MANY OTHERS), WHEN THROUGH SHERWOOD FOREST CAME A TRADING CARAVAN OF RICH NORMAN MERCHANTS AND BARONS (LIKE TOO MANY OTHERS)...
HOLD, I PRAY THEE! WILT THOU NOT STOP TO AID A POOR FRIAR--?
AND WHY DOES A POOR FRIAR--A CHURCHMAN--WEAR YON HELMET OF WAR?
TWUNG
AAIEE
YAAH!
TWUNG
BECAUSE I AM NOT STUPID--AND I TREASURE MY HEAD!
GOOD WORK, TUCK!!

SUCH DAYS WERE MADE FOR A MERRY FIGHT...
...BUT VERY FEW OF THE FIGHTS WITHIN SHERWOOD DID JUSTICE TO THE DAYS. INDEED, ROBIN AND HIS MEN HAD SHARPENED THEIR WITS BATTLE SKILLS TO A VERY FINE POINT...

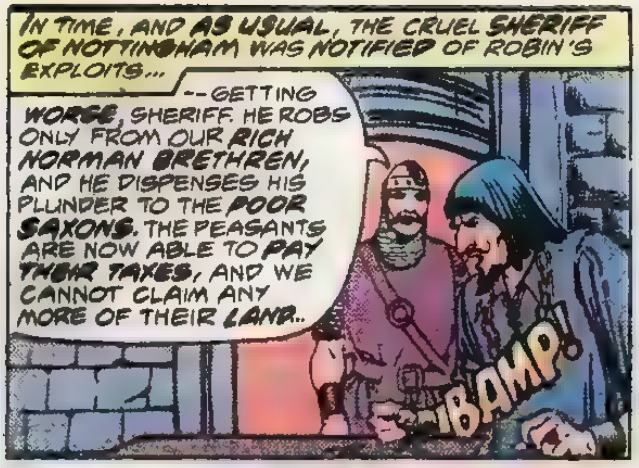
INDEED, TO THE POINT WHERE ROBBING FROM THE NORMAN RICH...


--WAS BECOMING LITTLE MORE THAN A BORING GAME...

...AND GIVING TO SAXON POOR--
LOOK! THE SHERIFF'S MEN -- COMING TO BURN DOWN OUR VILLAGE BECAUSE WE COULD NOT PAY THE TAXES!

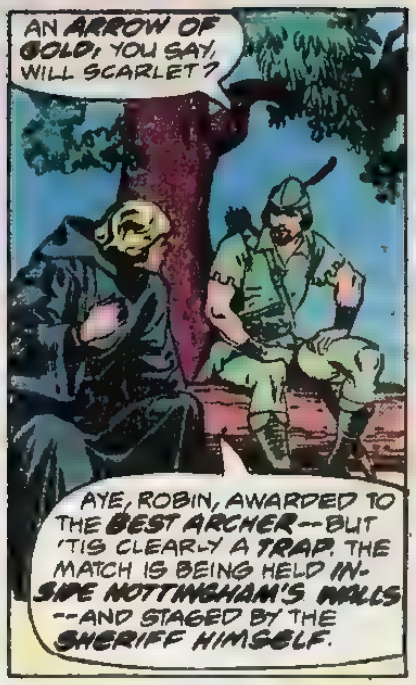
NO--! IT'S ROBIN-- ROBIN HOOD!!

--WAS NOW THE ONLY TRUE JOY!
AND NOW, MY FRIENDS, SINCE THE RICH HAVE TURNED POOR-- 'TIS TIME FOR THE TRULY POOR TO ENJOY A LITTLE WEALTH!
GOD BLESS YOU, ROBIN HOOD-- BLESS YOU!!

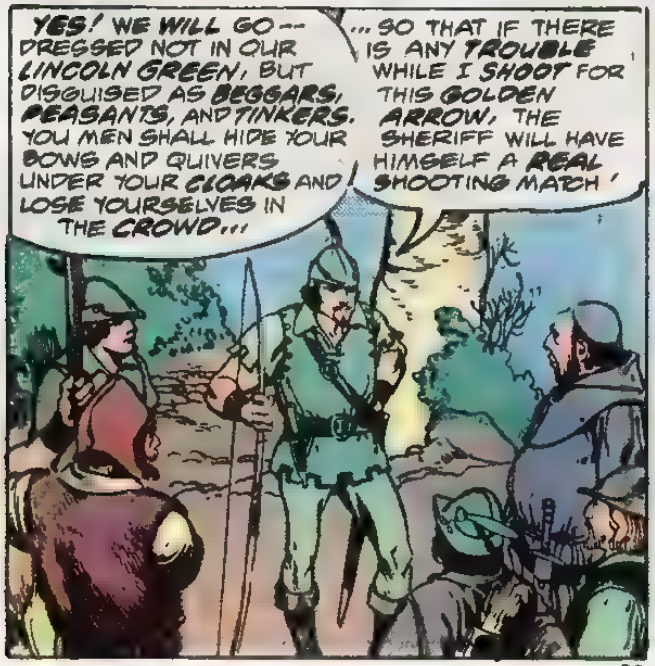

IN TIME, AND AS USUAL, THE CRUEL SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM WAS NOTIFIED OF ROBIN'S EXPLOITS...
--GETTING WORSE, SHERIFF. HE ROBS ONLY FROM OUR RICH NORMAN BRETHREN, AND HE DISPENSES HIS PLUNDER TO THE POOR SAXONS. THE PEASANTS ARE NOW ABLE TO PAY THEIR TAXES, AND WE CANNOT CLAIM ANY MORE OF THEIR LAND..
BAMP!

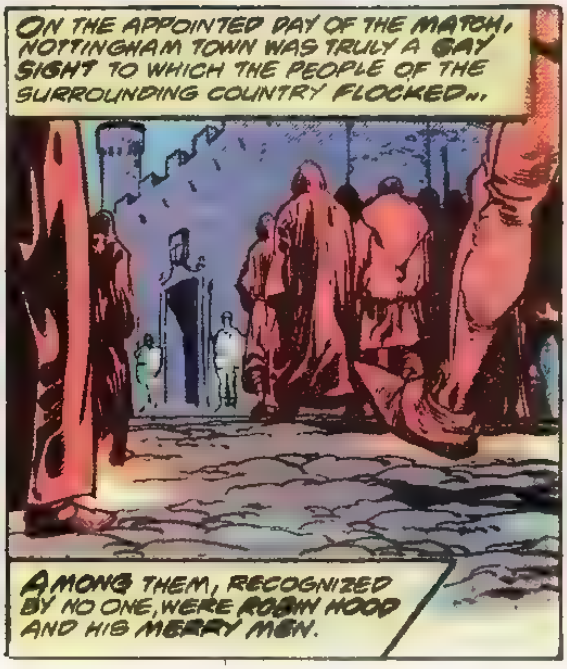
ROBIN HOOD MUST BE STOPPED--AND IF WE CANNOT CATCH HIM IN SHERWOOD FOREST, THEN WE MUST TRAP HIM HERE--LURE HIM INTO NOTTINGHAM WITH SOMETHING HE CANNOT RESIST...
YES... I KNOW HOW TO DO IT. WE SHALL HOLD A--

Shooting Match:
Prize: a Golden Arrow


AN ARROW OF GOLD, YOU SAY, WILL SCARLET?
AYE, ROBIN, AWARDED TO THE BEST ARCHER--BUT 'TIS CLEARLY A TRAP. THE MATCH IS BEING HELD IN-SIDE NOTTINGHAM'S WALLS --AND STAGED BY THE SHERIFF HIMSELF.

NO DOUBT IT IS A TRAP, WILL, BUT I WAS CHEATED OUT OF ONE SHOOTING MATCH--AS YOU WELL SAW. I'VE YET TO PUBLICLY PROVE MYSELF AS THE BEST ARCHER IN THE LAND. BESIDES, HOW CAN I MISS THE FUN OF CHEATING THE SHERIFF--?
THERE MUST BE A WAY TO ATTEND..


YES! WE WILL GO--DRESSED NOT IN OUR LINCOLN GREEN, BUT DISGUISED AS BEGGARS, PEASANTS, AND TINKERS. YOU MEN SHALL HIDE YOUR BOWS AND QUIVERS UNDER YOUR CLOAKS AND LOSE YOURSELVES IN THE CROWD...
...SO THAT IF THERE IS ANY TROUBLE WHILE I SHOOT FOR THIS GOLDEN ARROW, THE SHERIFF WILL HAVE HIMSELF A REAL SHOOTING MATCH!


ON THE APPOINTED DAY OF THE MATCH, NOTTINGHAM TOWN WAS TRULY A GAY SIGHT TO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY FLOCKED..
AMONG THEM, RECOGNIZED BY NO ONE, WERE ROBIN HOOD AND HIS MERRY MEN.

HOWEVER, ROBIN WAS NOT SURE HOW LONG HE COULD PASS WITHOUT BEING RECOGNIZED. HE WAS CERTAIN THAT THE GUARDS POSTED AT THE GATES WERE THERE TO WATCH FOR HIM, AND...
SAY-- LOOK AT YON FOLLOW IN THE RED JACKET...
UH-OH
I'LL WAGER EVERY RAGGED RASCAL WITHIN A HUNDRED MILES IS HERE TO TRY FOR THE GOLDEN ARROW-- BUT THIS RED JACKET LOOKS AS IF HE CAN SCARCELY DRAW A BOW!
WHEW.
THE RICH SAT IN COMFORT ON ONE SIDE; THE POOR STOOD WHERE THEY COULD ON THE OTHER. THE TARGETS WERE PLACED; THE COMPETITORS FORMED A LINE; AND THE CONTEST BEGAN. ONE OF THE SHERIFF'S OWN MEN -- WILLIAM OF YORK -- TOOK AND HELD AN EARLY LEAD..
BUT THE SAXON PEASANTS CHEERED WHEN ONE OF THEIR OWN RIVALLED WILLIAM OF YORK'S EVERY SHOT AND SOON THERE AROSE THE CRY OF: 'RED JACKET! RED JACKET IS THE BEST!'
BUT THERE WERE SOME IN THE CROWD OF PEASANTS WHO WERE OMINOUSLY SILENT...
IT SEEMS THE SHERIFF'S MEN ARE ANXIOUS TO CLOSE THE JAWS OF THIS TRAP, TUCK.
AYE, LITTLE JOHN, AND THEY MUST SUSPECT ROBIN OF WEARING SOME PADDING AROUND HIS MIDDLE. I'VE HAD MY FACE PEERED AT FOUR TIMES THUS FAR.
AND IN THE SHERIFF'S PAVILION ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CONTEST FIELD...
HAVE ANY OF THE MEN SEEN ROBIN HOOD AMONG THE ARCHERS?
NAY, SHERIFF, AND THE FIELD OF CONTESTANTS IS BEING NARROWED QUICKLY. THE FINAL TEN BEST ARE TO SHOOT NEXT...

AND OF THOSE TEN, WE KNOW OUR OWN SIX MEN WELL. OF THE TWO SAXON PEASANTS, ONE IS TOO TALL AND THE OTHER TOO SHORT. AND AS FOR THIS TATTERED RED JACKET, HIS BEARD IS BROWN WHILE HOOD'S IS YELLOW. BESIDES, THE BEGGAR IS BLIND IN ONE EYE.

BAH! THEN IF HE DOES NOT RANK IN THE TEN BEST, HE IS NOT HERE AT ALL! THIS ROBIN HOOD IS NOT ONLY A THIEF--

--BUT HE IS A COWARD AS WELL!!

THE MAN KNOWN AS RED JACKET MERELY SMILED...

...AND WHEN THE NEXT ROUND WAS SHOT...

TWUNG! TWUNG! TWUNG! TWUNG! TWUNG!

...THE FIELD WAS NARROWED TO TWO.

A SINGLE TARGET WOULD BE EMPLOYED FOR THE FINAL ROUND, TO BETTER GAUGE EACH OF THE TWO SHOTS. WILLIAM OF YORK WAS TO SHOOT FIRST...

...AND TOOK A PERFECT BULLSEYE.

NOTTINGHAM GLOATED SMUGLY.

WELL, AT LEAST ONE OF OUR MEN WINS THE GOLDEN ARROW.

GIVE UP, RED JACKET! YOU CAN'T BEAT THAT SHOT-- NO ONE CAN BEAT A PERFECT BULLSEYE!

AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FIELD, NEARLY EVERY FACE WAS TURNED DOWN IN DEFEAT...

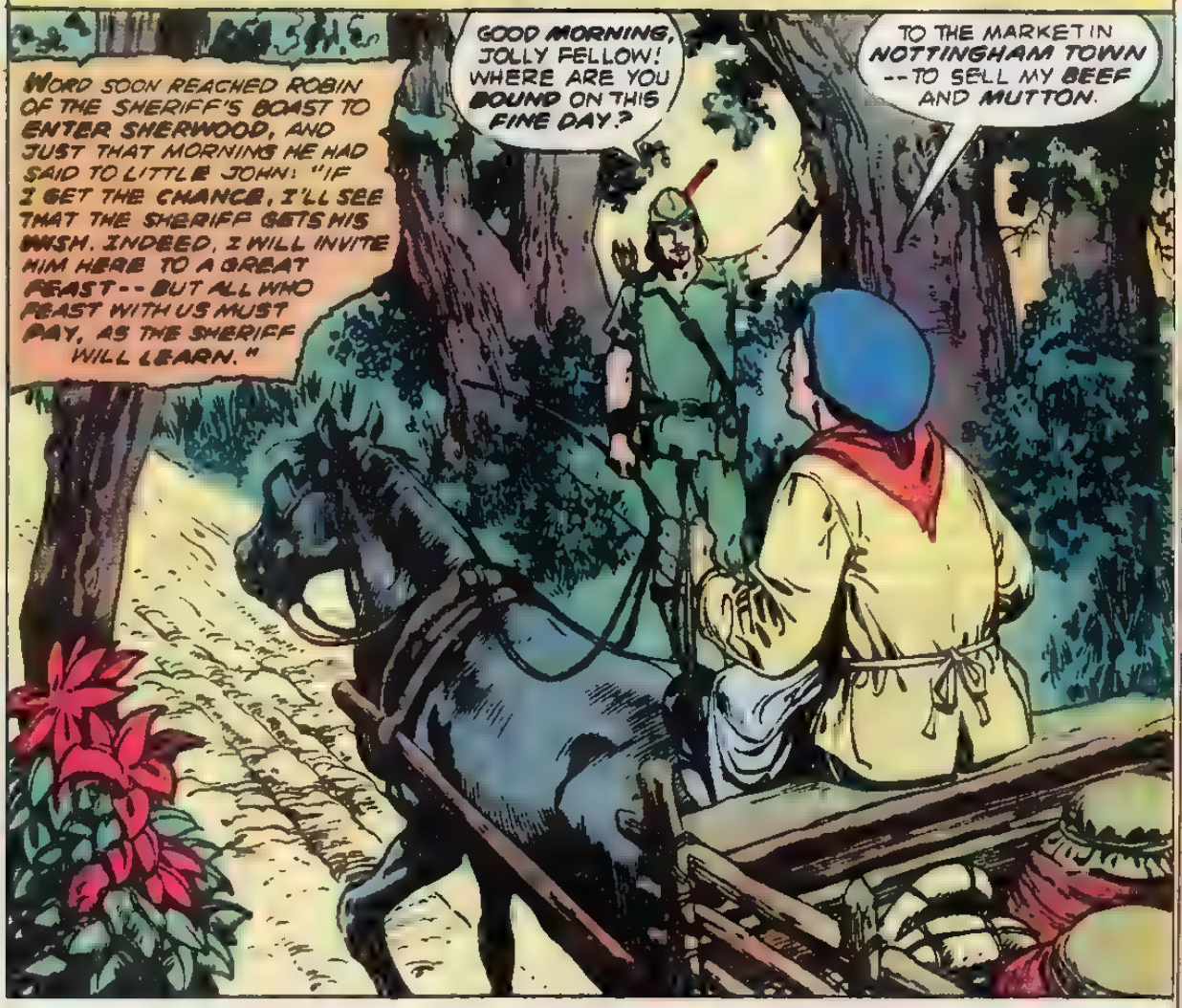
THE SHERIFF'S RIGHT. HOW CAN RED JACKET POSSIBLY WIN NOW?

AND YET, NOT EVERY FACE AMONG THE SAXONS WORE A FROWN. THERE WERE SEVERAL WHO SEEM TO...KNOW SOMETHING.

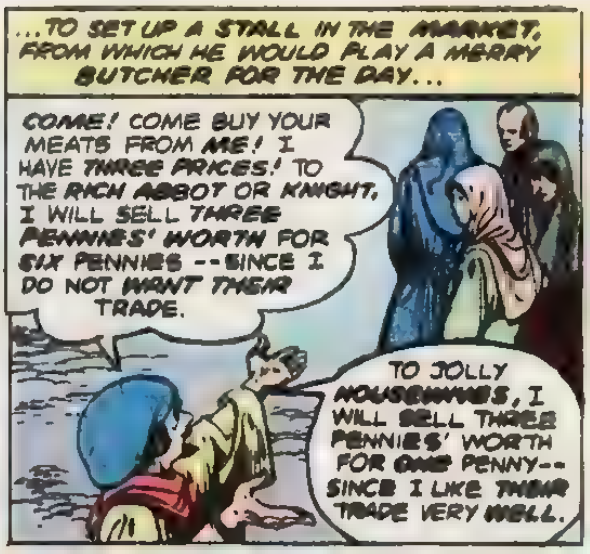
RED JACKET'S FACE WAS DIFFICULT TO READ, BUT THE TALE WAS TOLD WELL ENOUGH--
TWUNG
FWWZZZ
CHUK-K-K
SCHAP
--BY HIS MIRACULOUS ARROW.
HE SPLIT WILLIAM OF YORK'S ARROW--SPLIT IT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE!!
HE WINS--RED JACKET WINS!!
AND SO, THE AWARD WAS PRESENTED FOR THE BEST SHOOTING MERRY ENGLAND HAD EVER SEEN...
THE GOLDEN ARROW IS YOURS, FELLOW. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
JOCK O'TEVIOTDALE--BUT MY FRIENDS CALL ME RED JACKET.
WELL, JOIN MY SERVICE, JOCK--AND YOU WILL WEAR A MUCH BETTER CLOAK THAN THOSE RAGS, AND YOU WILL EAT AT MY TABLE EVERY NIGHT.
NO, I AM MY OWN MAN, AND NO ONE IN ALL ENGLAND WILL BE MY MASTER.
NOW I HAVE TRULY LOST THIS DAY. I'VE LOST THE GOLDEN ARROW AND GOTTEN NOTHING IN RETURN--NOT EVEN ROBIN HOOD!

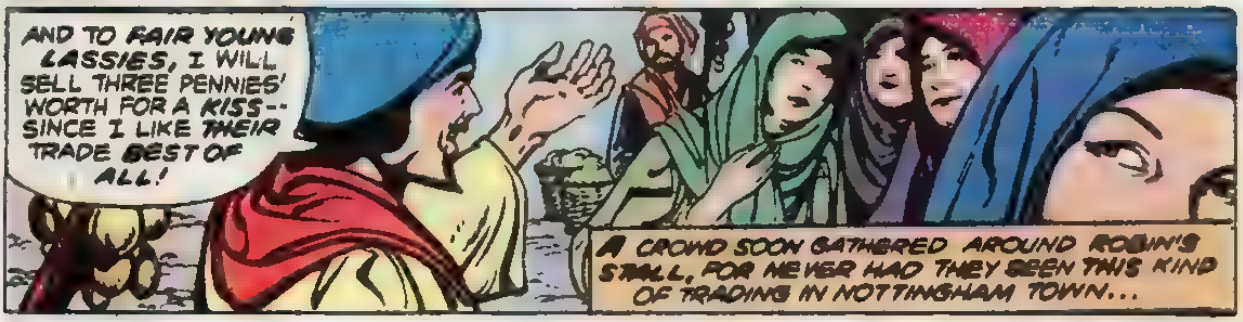
THAT EVENING, OUTSIDE THE GATES OF NOTTINGHAM TOWN...
WHY SO GLUM, ROBIN? YOU WON THE GOLDEN ARROW--AND PROVED YOURSELF THE BEST ARCHER IN THE LAND.
AYE...BUT THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM DOES NOT KNOW IT...
WHY THEN...SEND HIM A NOTE AND TELL HIM ABOUT IT.
AYE, LITTLE JOHN...
"...THE SHERIFF SHOULD BE TAKING DINNER JUST ABOUT NOW..."
WHY NOT SEND HIM MY GREETINGS--
TWUNG
"--TO SPICE UP HIS MEAL?"
WHAT THE--?! THE GOLDEN ARROW?!!
SPLAT
WITH A... MESSAGE... ATTACHED?
THAT DOES IT!!
Sheriff
Your Golden Arrow is herewith returned. I only wanted to win it, not keep it.
Robin Hood (Outlaw)
I'LL KILL HIM! NO MORE TRAPS! I'LL TAKE HIM BY FORCE --IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO--EVEN IF I HAVE TO--
"--MARCH INTO THE VERY DEPTHS OF SHERWOOD FOREST!!"
WAIT 'TILL THE SHERIFF LEARNS THE ARROW YOU RETURNED WAS MERELY A FALSE ONE, ROBIN-- PAINTED GOLD.
HA HA
HE DESERVES IT--FOR FORCING ME TO PAINT MY GOLDEN BEARD BROWN WITH NUT STAIN!

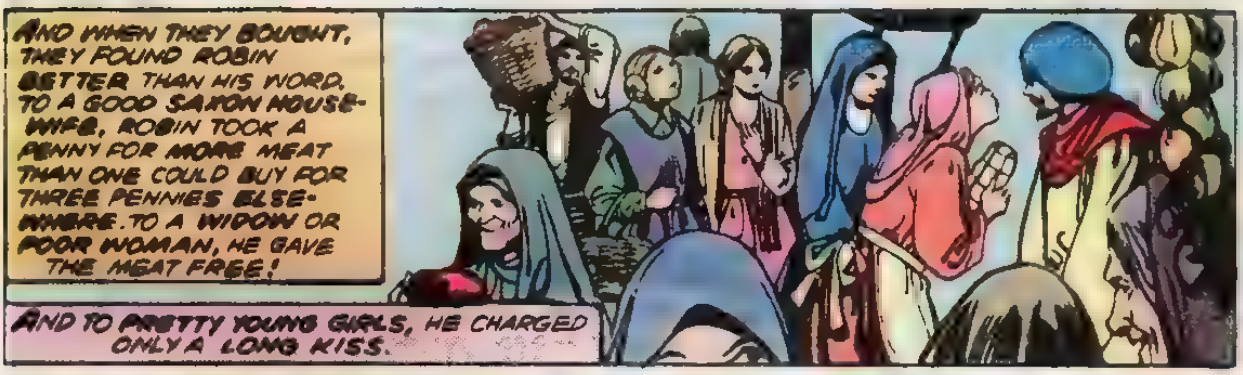
V: THE SHERIFF SPENDS A NIGHT IN SHERWOOD

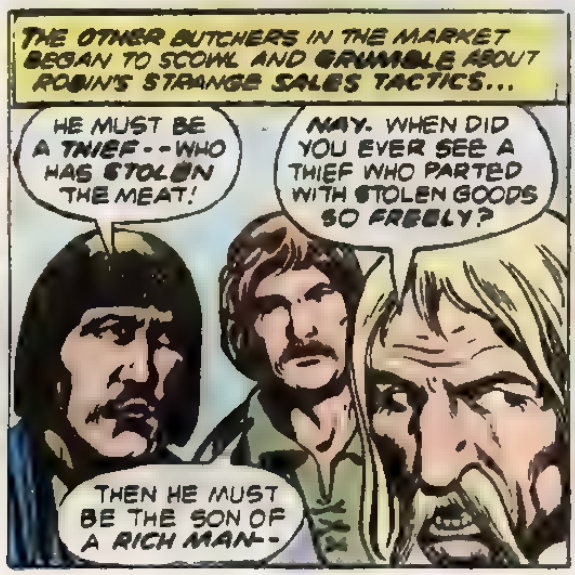

WORD SOON REACHED ROBIN OF THE SHERIFF'S BOAST TO ENTER SHERWOOD, AND JUST THAT MORNING HE HAD SAID TO LITTLE JOHN: "IF I GET THE CHANCE, I'LL SEE THAT THE SHERIFF GETS HIS WISH. INDEED, I WILL INVITE HIM HERE TO A GREAT FEAST -- BUT ALL WHO FEAST WITH US MUST PAY, AS THE SHERIFF WILL LEARN."
GOOD MORNING, JOLLY FELLOW! WHERE ARE YOU BOUND ON THIS FINE DAY?
TO THE MARKET IN NOTTINGHAM TOWN -- TO SELL MY BEEF AND MUTTON.

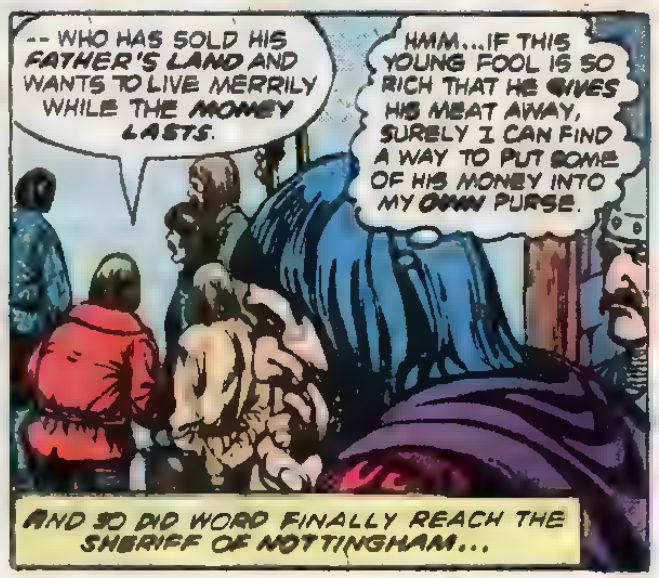
AND SO DID ROBIN ENTER THE GATES OF NOTTINGHAM TOWN...

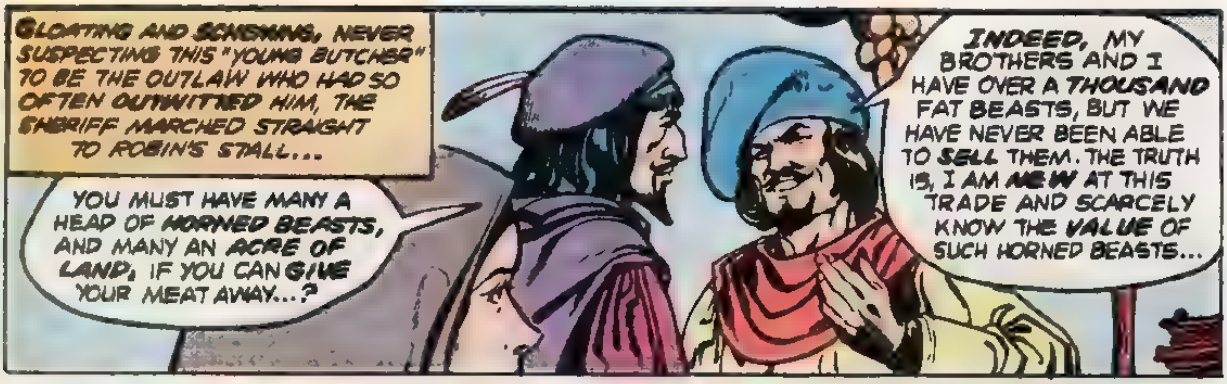

...TO SET UP A STALL IN THE MARKET, FROM WHICH HE WOULD PLAY A MERRY BUTCHER FOR THE DAY...
COME! COME BUY YOUR MEATS FROM ME! I HAVE THREE PRICES! TO THE RICH ABBOT OR KNIGHT, I WILL SELL THREE PENNIES' WORTH FOR SIX PENNIES --SINCE I DO NOT WANT THEIR TRADE.
TO JOLLY HOUSEWIVES, I WILL SELL THREE PENNIES' WORTH FOR ONE PENNY-- SINCE I LIKE THEIR TRADE VERY WELL.

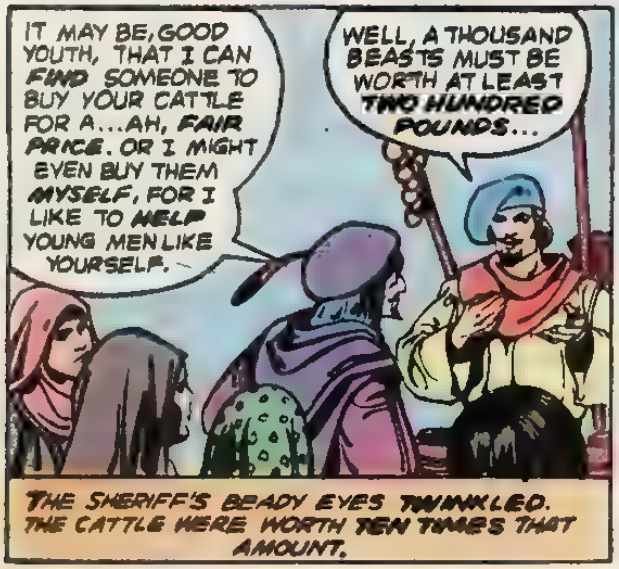

AND TO FAIR YOUNG LASSIES, I WILL SELL THREE PENNIES' WORTH FOR A KISS-- SINCE I LIKE THEIR TRADE BEST OF ALL!
A CROWD SOON GATHERED AROUND ROBIN'S STALL, FOR NEVER HAD THEY SEEN THIS KIND OF TRADING IN NOTTINGHAM TOWN...

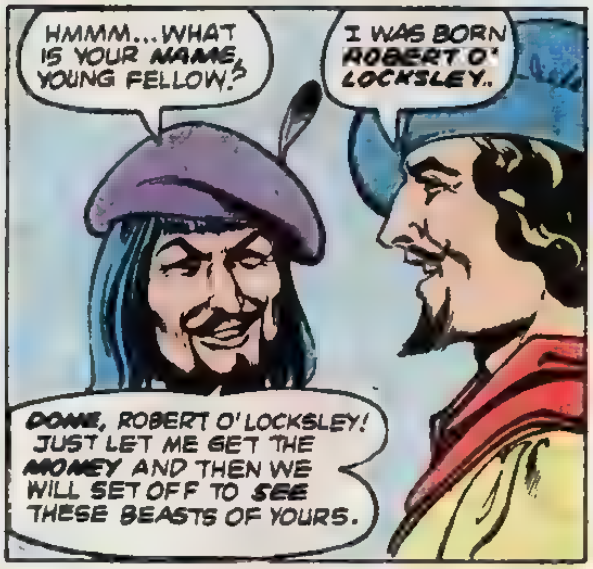

AND WHEN THEY BOUGHT, THEY FOUND ROBIN BETTER THAN HIS WORD. TO A GOOD SAXON HOUSE-WIFE, ROBIN TOOK A PENNY FOR MORE MEAT THAN ONE COULD BUY FOR THREE PENNIES ELSE-WHERE. TO A WIDOW OR POOR WOMAN, HE GAVE THE MEAT FREE!
AND TO PRETTY YOUNG GIRLS, HE CHARGED ONLY A LONG KISS.


THE OTHER BUTCHERS IN THE MARKET BEGAN TO SCOWL AND GRUMBLE ABOUT ROBIN'S STRANGE SALES TACTICS...
HE MUST BE A THIEF--WHO HAS STOLEN THE MEAT!
NAY. WHEN DID YOU EVER SEE A THIEF WHO PARTED WITH STOLEN GOODS SO FREELY?
THEN HE MUST BE THE SON OF A RICH MAN--


--WHO HAS SOLD HIS FATHER'S LAND AND WANTS TO LIVE MERRILY WHILE THE MONEY LASTS.
HMM...IF THIS YOUNG FOOL IS SO RICH THAT HE GIVES HIS MEAT AWAY, SURELY I CAN FIND A WAY TO PUT SOME OF HIS MONEY INTO MY OWN PURSE.
AND SO DID WORD FINALLY REACH THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM...

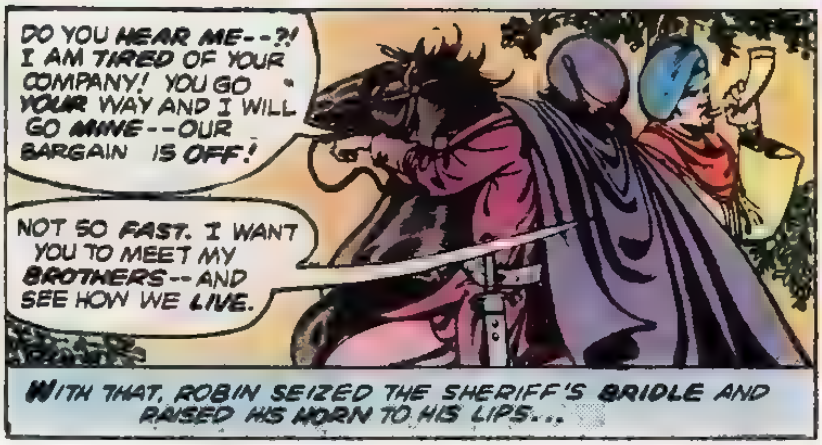

GLOATING AND SCHEMING, NEVER SUSPECTING THIS "YOUNG BUTCHER" TO BE THE OUTLAW WHO HAD SO OFTEN OUTWITTED HIM, THE SHERIFF MARCHED STRAIGHT TO ROBIN'S STALL...
YOU MUST HAVE MANY A HEAD OF HORNED BEASTS, AND MANY AN ACRE OF LAND, IF YOU CAN GIVE YOUR MEAT AWAY...?
INDEED, MY BROTHERS AND I HAVE OVER A THOUSAND FAT BEASTS, BUT WE HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO SELL THEM. THE TRUTH IS, I AM NEW AT THIS TRADE AND SCARCELY KNOW THE VALUE OF SUCH HORNED BEASTS...


IT MAY BE, GOOD YOUTH, THAT I CAN FIND SOMEONE TO BUY YOUR CATTLE FOR A...AH, FAIR PRICE. OR I MIGHT EVEN BUY THEM MYSELF, FOR I LIKE TO HELP YOUNG MEN LIKE YOURSELF.
WELL, A THOUSAND BEASTS MUST BE WORTH AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED POUNDS...
THE SHERIFF'S BEADY EYES TWINKLED. THE CATTLE WERE WORTH TEN TIMES THAT AMOUNT.

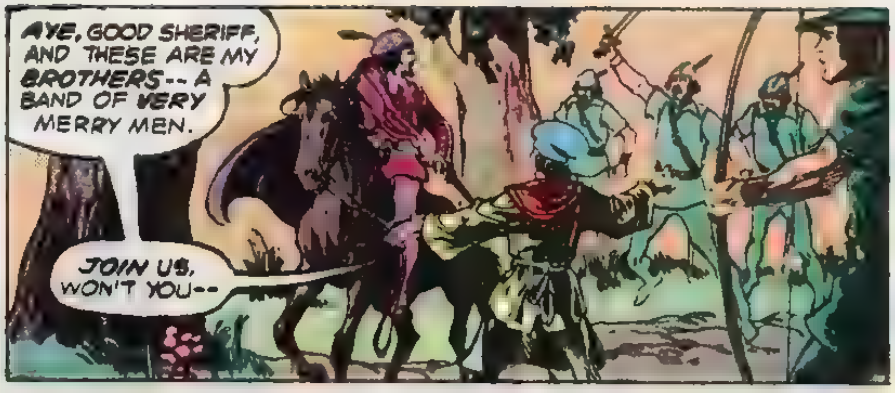

HMMM...WHAT IS YOUR NAME, YOUNG FELLOW?
I WAS BORN ROBERT O' LOCKSLEY..
DONE, ROBERT O' LOCKSLEY! JUST LET ME GET THE MONEY AND THEN WE WILL SET OFF TO SEE THESE BEASTS OF YOURS.

THAT AFTERNOON, WITH A FAT PURSE OF GOLD AND SILVER AT THE SHERIFF'S BELT, THEY ENTERED A CERTAIN FOREST...
SHERWOOD! YOUR LAND IS IN SHERWOOD? THEN MAY THE SAINTS PRESERVE US FROM THAT OUTLAW ROBIN HOOD!
HA! I KNOW THIS ROBIN HOOD VERY WELL. YOU ARE IN NO MORE DANGER FROM HIM THAN YOU ARE FROM... ME.

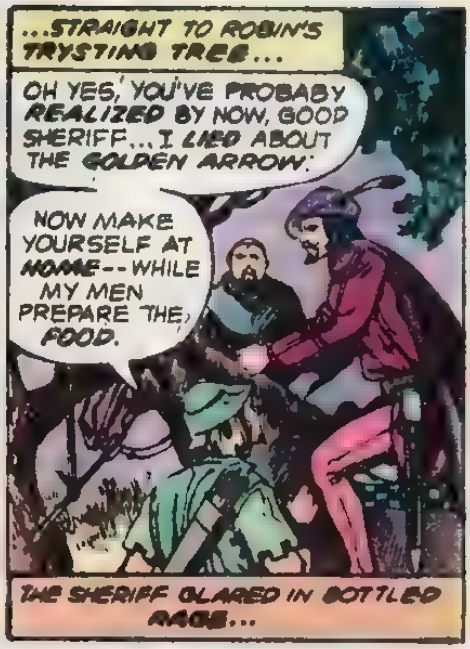
DEEPER INTO THE DARK FOREST, A HERD OF DUN DEER SPRANG ACROSS THE PATH IN FRONT OF THEM...
SEE--? THOSE ARE MY HORNED BEASTS, GOOD MASTER SHERIFF. ARE THEY NOT SO FAT AND FAIR AS I HAVE SAID?
WHAT--? I LIKE THIS NOT...


DO YOU HEAR ME--?! I AM TIRED OF YOUR COMPANY! YOU GO YOUR WAY AND I WILL GO MINE--OUR BARGAIN IS OFF!
NOT SO FAST. I WANT YOU TO MEET MY BROTHERS--AND SEE HOW WE LIVE.
WITH THAT, ROBIN SEIZED THE SHERIFF'S BRIDLE AND RAISED HIS HORN TO HIS LIPS...

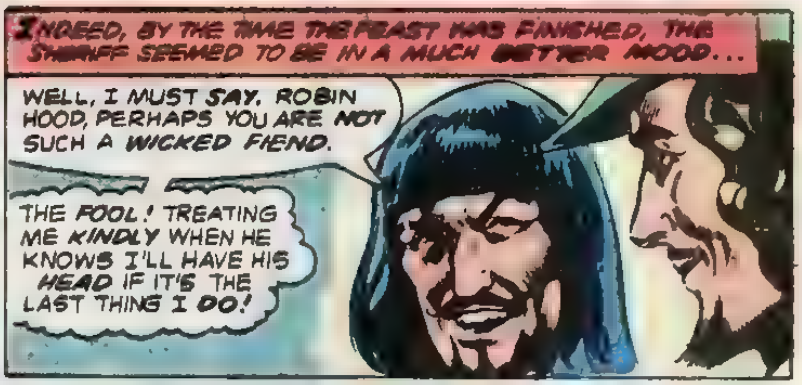
YOU .. YOU'RE--
--ROBIN HOOD HIMSELF!!
TURA-WWW!


AYE, GOOD SHERIFF, AND THESE ARE MY BROTHERS-- A BAND OF VERY MERRY MEN.
JOIN US, WON'T YOU--

"...FOR DINNER IN SHERWOOD FOREST."
A FEAST WAS ALREADY IN THE MAKING WHEN THE SHERIFF WAS LED INTO THE GREENWOOD GLADE...

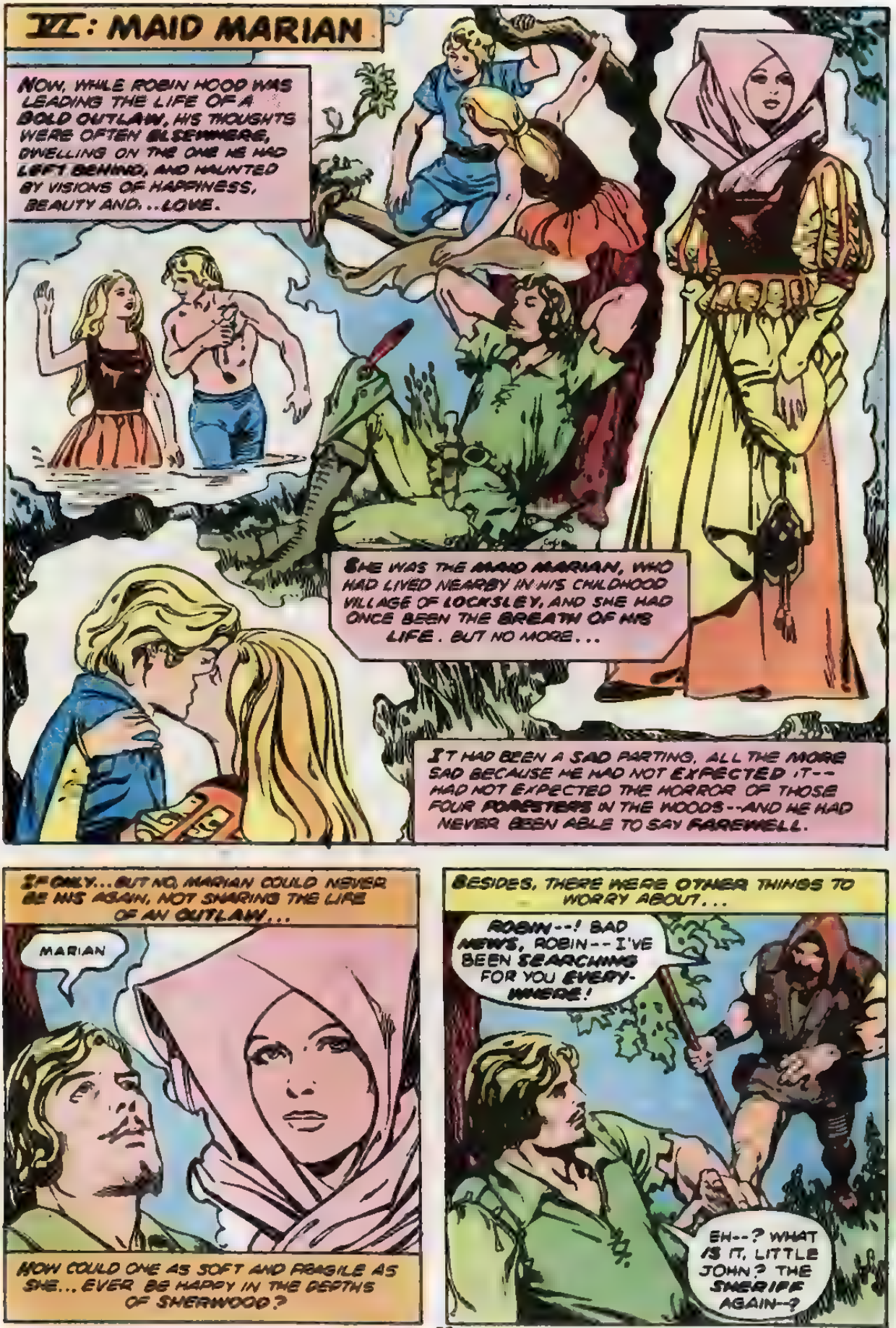

...STRAIGHT TO ROBIN'S TRYSTING TREE...
OH YES, YOU'VE PROBABY REALIZED BY NOW, GOOD SHERIFF... I LIED ABOUT THE GOLDEN ARROW.
NOW MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME-- WHILE MY MEN PREPARE THE FOOD.
THE SHERIFF GLARED IN BOTTLED RAGE...

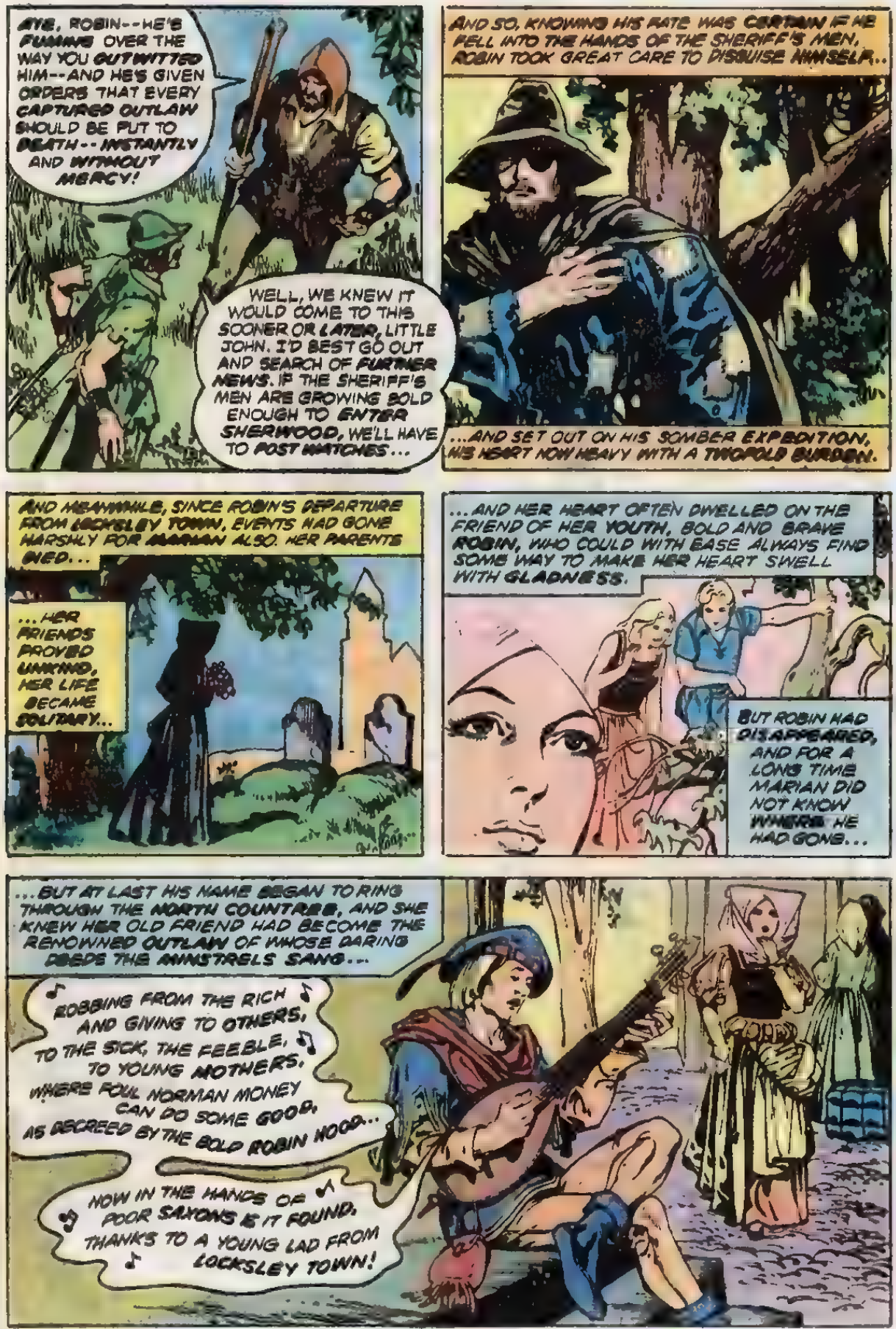
...BUT SOON THE GLADE WAS FILLED WITH THE SAVORY SMELLS OF ROASTING VENISON AND CAPONS, AND BEFORE LONG THE BROAD TABLE WAS PILED HIGH WITH A FEAST THE LIKES OF WHICH THE SHERIFF HAD NEVER SEEN.
AND, BEING A GLUTTON, HE QUICKLY PUT ASIDE HIS FEARS AND ATTACKED THE FOOD.


INDEED, BY THE TIME THE FEAST WAS FINISHED, THE SHERIFF SEEMED TO BE IN A MUCH BETTER MOOD...
WELL, I MUST SAY, ROBIN HOOD, PERHAPS YOU ARE NOT SUCH A WICKED FIEND.
THE FOOL! TREATING ME KINDLY WHEN HE KNOWS I'LL HAVE HIS HEAD IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!

AND NOW, BRAVE YEOMAN, THANK YOU FOR THE FEAST... BUT IT IS GROWING DARK AND I MUST BE ON MY WAY...

JUST A MOMENT, FRIEND SHERIFF, BUT HAVE YOU NOT FORGOTTEN TO PAY YOUR SCORE? WE MAY KEEP A MERRY INN HERE IN SHERWOOD, BUT ALL WHO DINE WITH US MUST PAY.
AH...WELL, CERTAINLY...
RIGHT GLADLY WILL I PAY FOR SUCH A SUMPTUOUS FEAST. SHALL WE SAY... THREE PENNIES?
NAY, SHERIFF...
...ALL OF IT!
IT WOULD BE AN INSULT TO THE KING WERE I TO VALUE HIS SHERIFF AT ANY LESS THAN TWO-HUNDRED POUNDS!
CHEP
YOU DOG! YOU WOULD ROB ME-- THE SHERIFF?!
INDEED, AND THE NEXT TIME YOU TRY TO CHEAT A YOUNG MAN OUT OF HIS FORTUNE--
--REMEMBER THAT HE MAY RELIEVE YOU OF YOURS INSTEAD--
TUK
UHN..!
--BY TURNING THE TABLES!
CHUD
AND SO DID THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM RIDE SLOWLY OUT OF SHERWOOD FOREST...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
...A SADDER, POORER, BUT NO WISER MAN.


VI: MAID MARIAN
NOW, WHILE ROBIN HOOD WAS LEADING THE LIFE OF A BOLD OUTLAW, HIS THOUGHTS WERE OFTEN ELSEWHERE, DWELLING ON THE ONE HE HAD LEFT BEHIND, AND HAUNTED BY VISIONS OF HAPPINESS, BEAUTY AND...LOVE.
SHE WAS THE MAID MARIAN, WHO HAD LIVED NEARBY IN HIS CHILDHOOD VILLAGE OF LOCKSLEY, AND SHE HAD ONCE BEEN THE BREATH OF HIS LIFE. BUT NO MORE...
IT HAD BEEN A SAD PARTING, ALL THE MORE SAD BECAUSE HE HAD NOT EXPECTED IT--HAD NOT EXPECTED THE HORROR OF THOSE FOUR FORESTERS IN THE WOODS--AND HE HAD NEVER BEEN ABLE TO SAY FAREWELL.
IF ONLY...BUT NO, MARIAN COULD NEVER BE HIS AGAIN, NOT SHARING THE LIFE OF AN OUTLAW...
MARIAN
HOW COULD ONE AS SOFT AND FRAGILE AS SHE...EVER BE HAPPY IN THE DEPTHS OF SHERWOOD?
BESIDES, THERE WERE OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT...
ROBIN--! BAD NEWS, ROBIN--I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU EVERYWHERE!
EH--? WHAT IS IT, LITTLE JOHN? THE SHERIFF AGAIN--?


AYE, ROBIN--HE'S FUMING OVER THE WAY YOU OUTWITTED HIM--AND HE'S GIVEN ORDERS THAT EVERY CAPTURED OUTLAW SHOULD BE PUT TO DEATH--INSTANTLY AND WITHOUT MERCY!
WELL, WE KNEW IT WOULD COME TO THIS SOONER OR LATER, LITTLE JOHN. I'D BEST GO OUT AND SEARCH OF FURTHER NEWS. IF THE SHERIFF'S MEN ARE GROWING BOLD ENOUGH TO ENTER SHERWOOD, WE'LL HAVE TO POST WATCHES...
AND SO, KNOWING HIS FATE WAS CERTAIN IF HE FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE SHERIFF'S MEN, ROBIN TOOK GREAT CARE TO DISGUISE HIMSELF...
...AND SET OUT ON HIS SOMBER EXPEDITION, HIS HEART NOW HEAVY WITH A TWOFOLD BURDEN.
AND MEANWHILE, SINCE ROBIN'S DEPARTURE FROM LOCKSLEY TOWN, EVENTS HAD GONE HARSHLY FOR MARIAN ALSO. HER PARENTS DIED...
...HER FRIENDS PROVED UNKIND, HER LIFE BECAME SOLITARY...
...AND HER HEART OFTEN DWELLED ON THE FRIEND OF HER YOUTH, BOLD AND BRAVE ROBIN, WHO COULD WITH EASE ALWAYS FIND SOME WAY TO MAKE HER HEART SWELL WITH GLADNESS.
BUT ROBIN HAD DISAPPEARED, AND FOR A LONG TIME MARIAN DID NOT KNOW WHERE HE HAD GONE...
...BUT AT LAST HIS NAME BEGAN TO RING THROUGH THE NORTH COUNTRIES, AND SHE KNEW HER OLD FRIEND HAD BECOME THE RENOWNED OUTLAW OF WHOSE DARING DEEDS THE MINSTRELS SANG...
♪ ROBBING FROM THE RICH AND GIVING TO OTHERS, TO THE SICK, THE FEEBLE, TO YOUNG MOTHERS, WHERE FOUL NORMAN MONEY CAN DO SOME GOOD, AS DECREED BY THE BOLD ROBIN HOOD...
NOW IN THE HANDS OF POOR SAXONS IS IT FOUND, THANKS TO A YOUNG LAD FROM LOCKSLEY TOWN! ♪

AT LAST, LONELY AND FRIENDLESS AND STILL REMEMBERING THE HAPPY DAYS OF HER YOUTH, MARIAN RESOLVED TO SEEK OUT ROBIN IN SHERWOOD FOREST...

BUT SHE KNEW HOW UNSAFE THAT COUNTRY COULD BE FOR A WOMAN TRAVELING ALONE...

...AND SO SHE PUT ON THE CLOTHES OF A SQUIRE, TOOK QUIVER AND BOW, SWORD AND BUCKLER, AND THUS ARMED... SET OUT ON HER MISSION.

ROBIN HAD BEEN WALKING AN HOUR BEFORE HE SAW THE FIGURE OF A HANDSOMELY DRESSED SQUIRE APPROACHING...

AND SINCE IN THESE DAYS, IT BEHOOVED HIM TO BE WARY, HE STEPPED OUT OF SIGHT...

...WAITING UNTIL THE YOUTH REACHED HIS HIDING SPOT BEFORE SPRINGING OUT WITH A LOUD CHALLENGE.

WHO ARE YOU--AND WHAT DO YOU WANT IN SHERWOOD?

MARIAN JUDGED THE MAN TO BE SOME RUDE RUFFIAN, AND KNEW SHE MUST REPLY IN A BOLD MANNER...

STAND ASIDE, FELLOW, AND LET ME GO ON MY WAY. I HAVE NO BUSINESS WITH YOU.

AYE, BUT I MAY HAVE BUSINESS WITH YOU. TELL ME WHY YOU GO THROUGH THE FOREST--OR I MUST TURN YOU BACK.

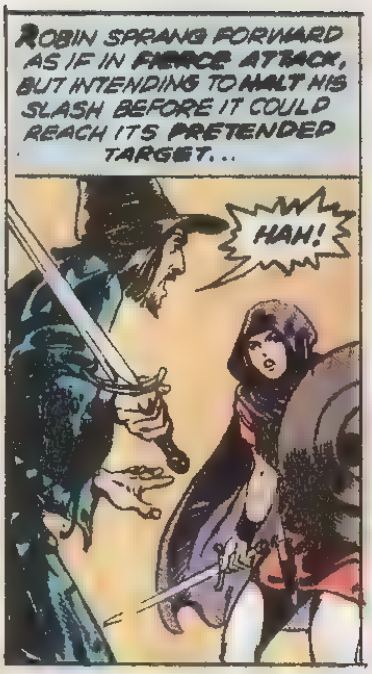
TURN ME BACK?! THAT YOU'LL NEVER DO, RUFFIAN! FORCE ME TO DRAW SWORD IN DEFENSE AND I PROMISE YOU WILL RUE THIS DAY!

NAH! WHY, THIS IS A BRAVE CHILD! AND WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH THAT PRETTY LITTLE BODKIN OF YOURS, BOY?

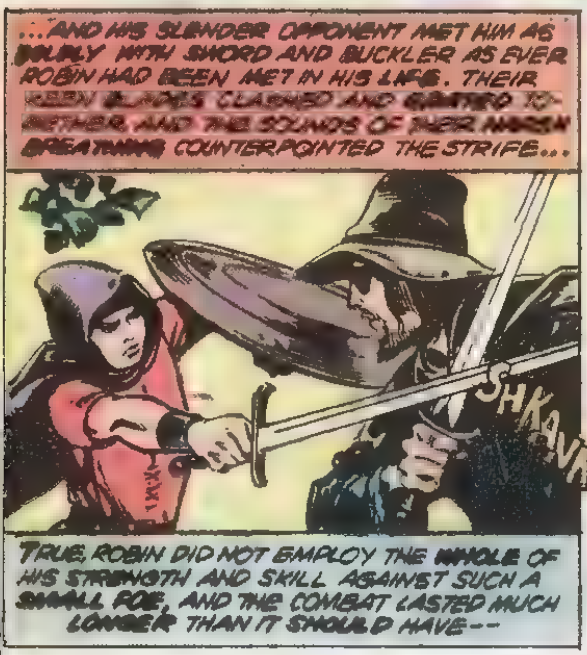
'TIS A BODKIN YOUR BELLY MAY FIND TOO SHARP! NOW GIVE WAY--FOR I SEEK THE HEART OF THE FOREST AND NONE SHALL STOP ME!

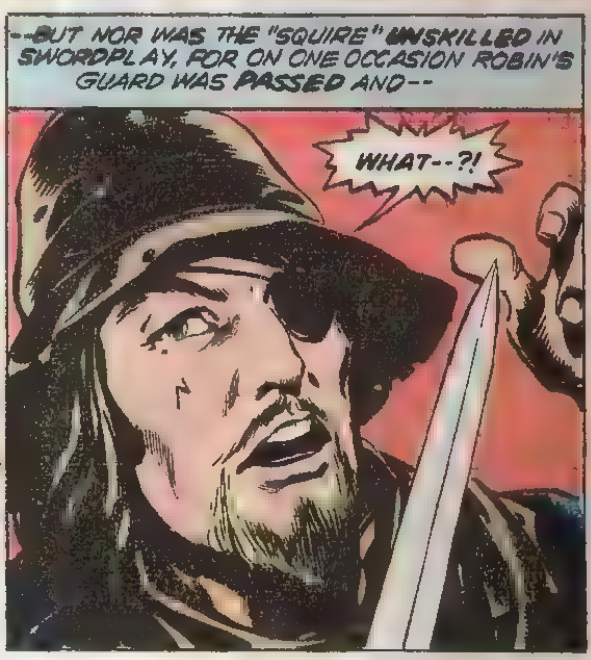
NAY, I BID YOU RETURN. SEEK YOUR OWN SAFETY AND LEAVE THE FOREST GLADES IN PEACE...OR I SHALL BE COMPELLED TO DRAW WEAPON ALSO.

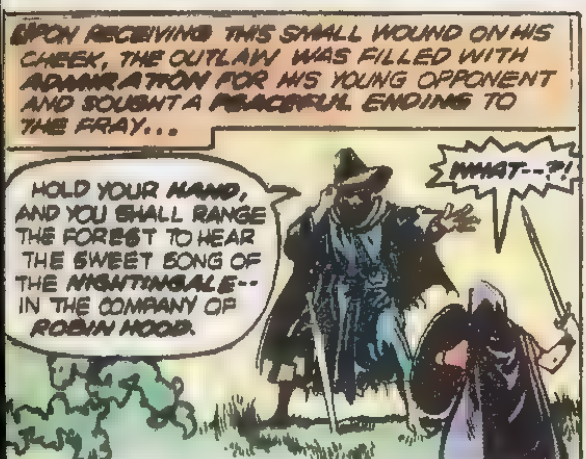
DRAW IF YOU WILL--BUT I WILL NOT GO BACK!
'TIS NOT A FIGHT I WANT, BUT PERHAPS THE MERE SIGHT OF MY BLADE WILL DRIVE THE LAD AWAY...

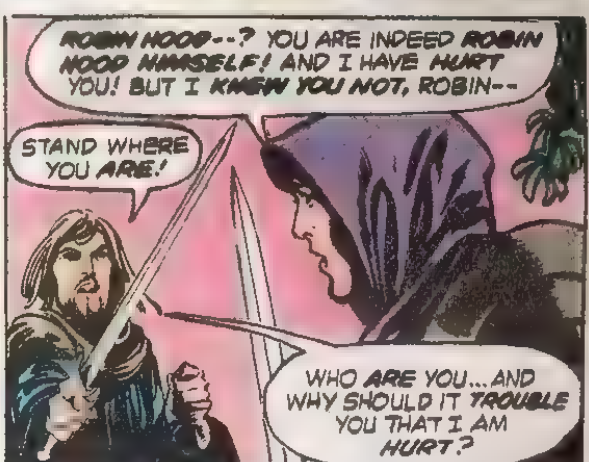

ROBIN SPRANG FORWARD AS IF IN FIERCE ATTACK, BUT INTENDING TO HALT HIS SLASH BEFORE IT COULD REACH ITS PRETENDED TARGET...
HAH!

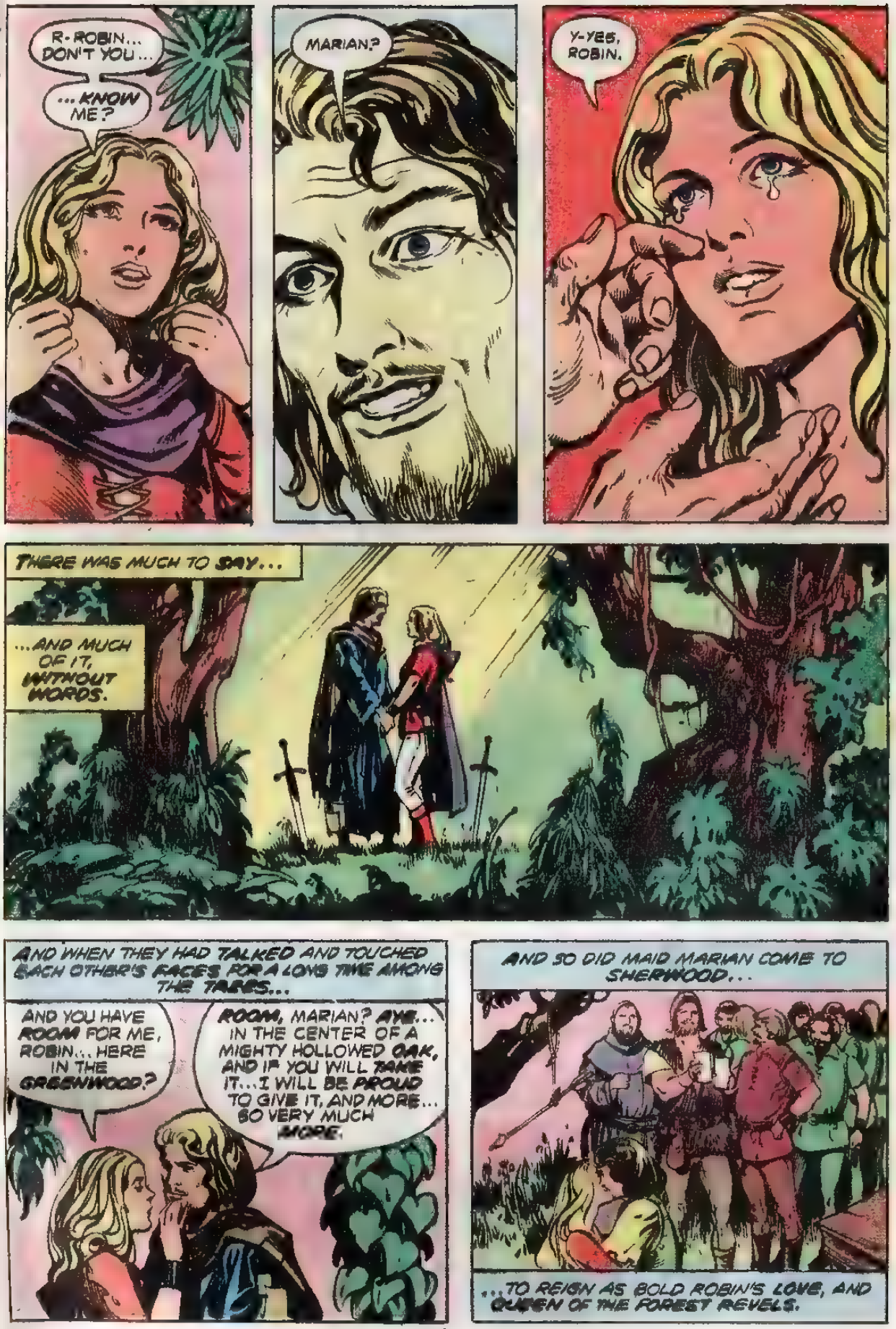
BUT HE NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO HALT IT...
HAH YOURSELF!
KRANG
...FOR HIS SLASH WAS DEFTLY TURNED ASIDE.


...AND HIS SLENDER OPPONENT MET HIM AS BOLDLY WITH SWORD AND BUCKLER AS EVER ROBIN HAD BEEN MET IN HIS LIFE. THEIR KEEN BLADES CLASHED AND GUARDED TOGETHER, AND THE SOUNDS OF THEIR HARSH BREATHING COUNTERPOINTED THE STRIFE...
SHKAVK
TRUE, ROBIN DID NOT EMPLOY THE WHOLE OF HIS STRENGTH AND SKILL AGAINST SUCH A SMALL FOE, AND THE COMBAT LASTED MUCH LONGER THAN IT SHOULD HAVE--


--BUT NOR WAS THE "SQUIRE" UNSKILLED IN SWORDPLAY, FOR ON ONE OCCASION ROBIN'S GUARD WAS PASSED AND--
WHAT--?!


UPON RECEIVING THIS SMALL WOUND ON HIS CHEEK, THE OUTLAW WAS FILLED WITH ADMIRATION FOR HIS YOUNG OPPONENT AND SOUGHT A PEACEFUL ENDING TO THE FRAY...
HOLD YOUR HAND, AND YOU SHALL RANGE THE FOREST TO HEAR THE SWEET SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE--IN THE COMPANY OF ROBIN HOOD.
WHAT--?!


ROBIN HOOD--? YOU ARE INDEED ROBIN HOOD HIMSELF! AND I HAVE HURT YOU! BUT I KNEW YOU NOT, ROBIN--
STAND WHERE YOU ARE!
WHO ARE YOU...AND WHY SHOULD IT TROUBLE YOU THAT I AM HURT?


R-ROBIN... DON'T YOU...
...KNOW ME?
MARIAN?
Y-YES, ROBIN.
THERE WAS MUCH TO SAY...
...AND MUCH OF IT, WITHOUT WORDS.
AND WHEN THEY HAD TALKED AND TOUCHED EACH OTHER'S FACES FOR A LONG TIME AMONG THE TREES...
AND YOU HAVE ROOM FOR ME, ROBIN... HERE IN THE GREENWOOD?
ROOM, MARIAN? AYE... IN THE CENTER OF A MIGHTY HOLLOWED OAK, AND IF YOU WILL TAKE IT... I WILL BE PROUD TO GIVE IT, AND MORE... SO VERY MUCH MORE.
AND SO DID MAID MARIAN COME TO SHERWOOD...
...TO REIGN AS BOLD ROBIN'S LOVE, AND QUEEN OF THE FOREST REVELS.

VII: HOW ROBIN HOOD CAME TO SERVE KING RICHARD

NOW THERE CAME TO RULE A NEW KING IN THE LAND, RICHARD THE LION-HEARTED, A MAN WHO SOUGHT TO BRING JUSTICE TO HIS REALM--FOR RICH AND POOR, NORMAN AND SAXON ALIKE--AND A MAN WHO WAS SAID TO DISLIKE THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM...

ROBIN AND HIS MEN WANTED TO MEET THIS NEW KING RICHARD--AND MORE THAN ANYTHING TO SERVE HIM.

BUT AS LONG AS THEY WERE FORCED TO LIVE THE LIFE OF OUTLAWS...SUCH WAS CLEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.

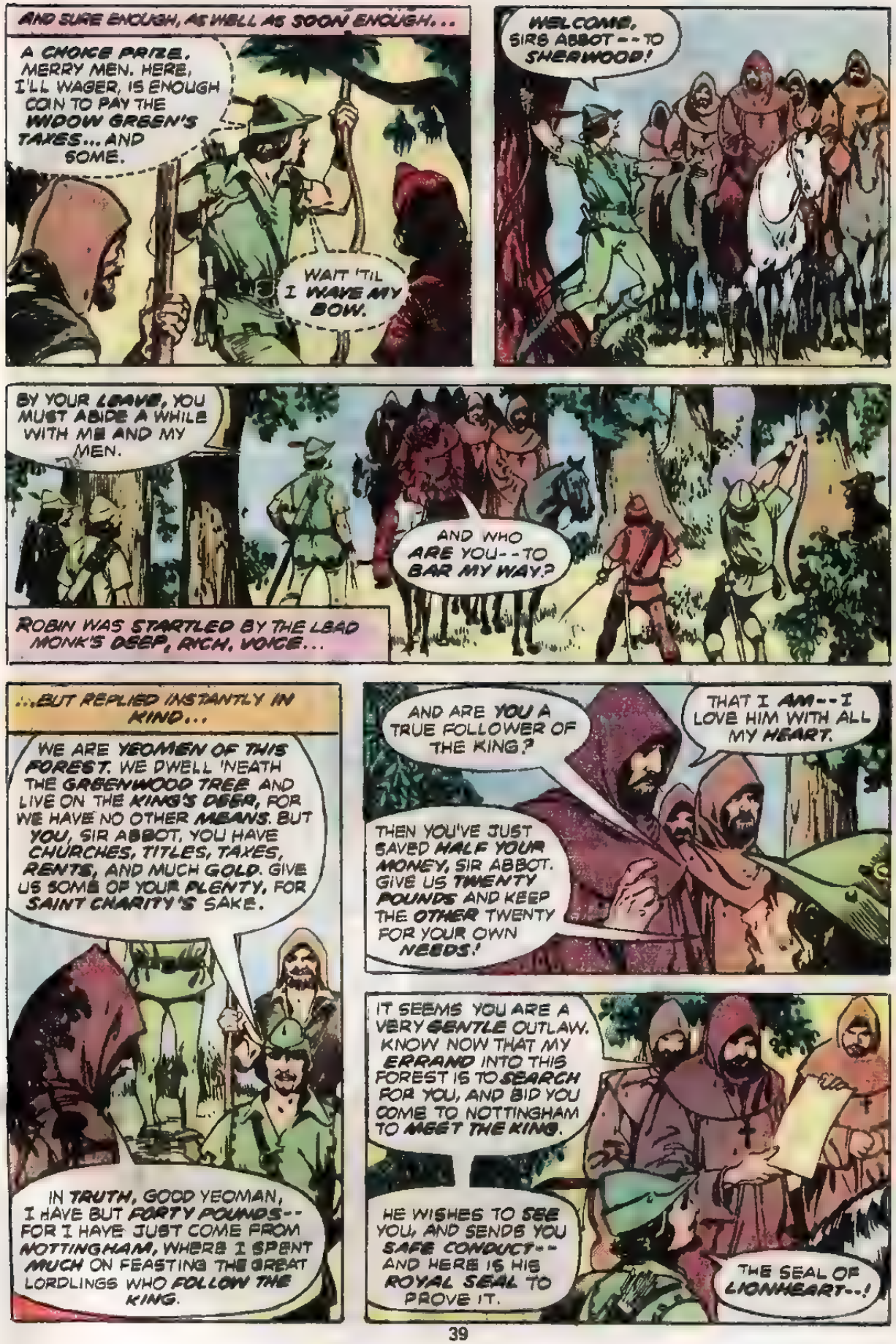
YET WHAT THE OUTLAWS DID NOT REALIZE WAS THAT KING RICHARD WISHED TO MEET THEM...

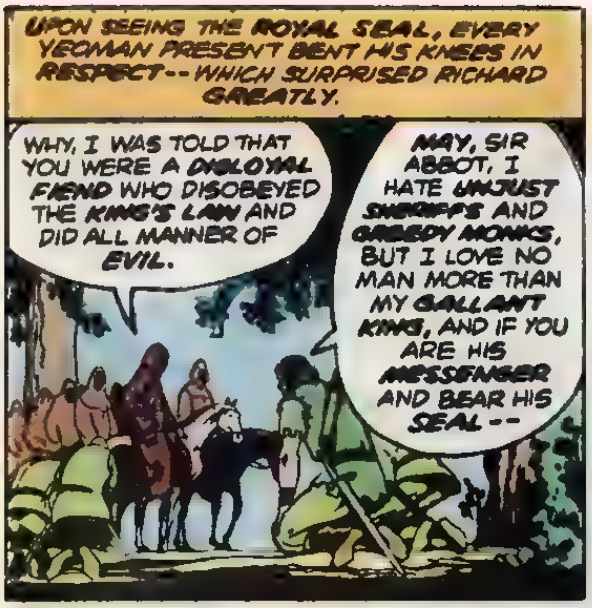
THEN, SHERIFF, IF THIS OUTLAW REALLY IS SUCH A FIEND, SHOULD I NOT ENTER SHERWOOD FOREST AND GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE MATTER?

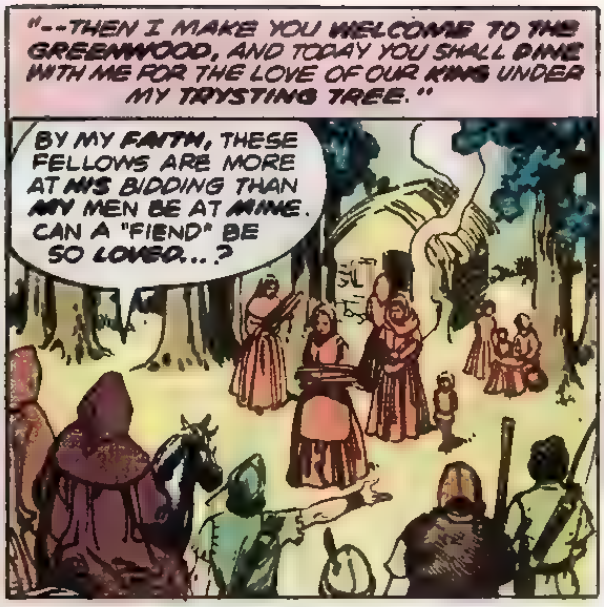
BAH! IT WOULD DO YOU NO GOOD, SIRE. ENTER THE FOREST WITH A COMPANY OF SOLDIERS IN ARMOR AND YOU'LL SEE NOTHING BUT LEAVES. NO, THE ONLY WAY TO DRAW THIS ROBIN HOOD OUT INTO THE OPEN IS TO DO THE UNTHINKABLE--

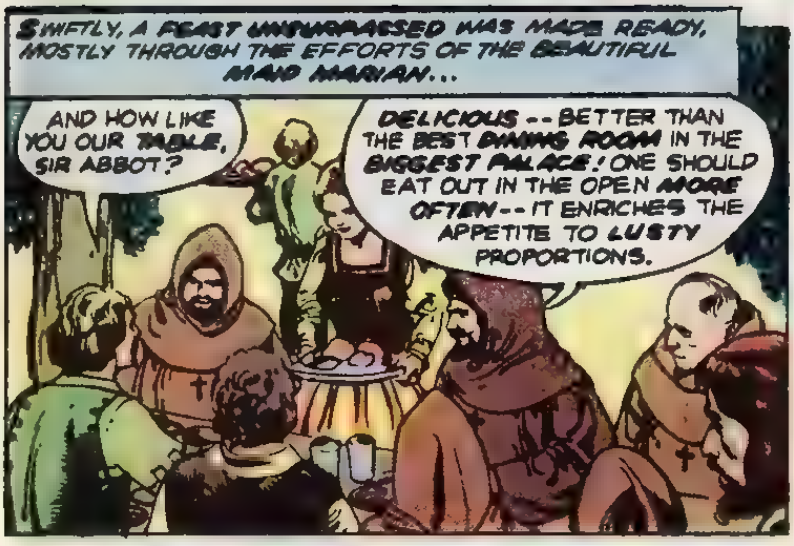
"--DISGUISE YOURSELVES AS RICH ABBOTS, RIPE FOR PLUCKING AND PLUNDER, AND THEN YOU'D MEET THE OUTLAWS SOON ENOUGH. BUT, OF COURSE, AS I'VE ALREADY SAID, SUCH A SCHEME IS UNTHINKABLE."

NOT TO RICHARD'S WAY OF THINKING. IN FACT, THE ADVENTURE WAS JUST TO THE STOUT KING'S LIKING...


AND SURE ENOUGH, AS WELL AS SOON ENOUGH...
A CHOICE PRIZE, MERRY MEN. HERE, I'LL WAGER, IS ENOUGH COIN TO PAY THE WIDOW GREEN'S TAXES... AND SOME.
WAIT 'TIL I WAVE MY BOW.
WELCOME, SIRS ABBOT--TO SHERWOOD!
BY YOUR LEAVE, YOU MUST ABIDE A WHILE WITH ME AND MY MEN.
AND WHO ARE YOU--TO BAR MY WAY?
ROBIN WAS STARTLED BY THE LEAD MONK'S DEEP, RICH, VOICE...
...BUT REPLIED INSTANTLY IN KIND...
WE ARE YEOMEN OF THIS FOREST. WE DWELL 'NEATH THE GREENWOOD TREE AND LIVE ON THE KING'S DEER, FOR WE HAVE NO OTHER MEANS. BUT YOU, SIR ABBOT, YOU HAVE CHURCHES, TITLES, TAXES, RENTS, AND MUCH GOLD. GIVE US SOME OF YOUR PLENTY, FOR SAINT CHARITY'S SAKE.
IN TRUTH, GOOD YEOMAN, I HAVE BUT FORTY POUNDS--FOR I HAVE JUST COME FROM NOTTINGHAM, WHERE I SPENT MUCH ON FEASTING THE GREAT LORDLINGS WHO FOLLOW THE KING.
AND ARE YOU A TRUE FOLLOWER OF THE KING?
THAT I AM--I LOVE HIM WITH ALL MY HEART.
THEN YOU'VE JUST SAVED HALF YOUR MONEY, SIR ABBOT. GIVE US TWENTY POUNDS AND KEEP THE OTHER TWENTY FOR YOUR OWN NEEDS!
IT SEEMS YOU ARE A VERY GENTLE OUTLAW. KNOW NOW THAT MY ERRAND INTO THIS FOREST IS TO SEARCH FOR YOU, AND BID YOU COME TO NOTTINGHAM TO MEET THE KING.
HE WISHES TO SEE YOU, AND SENDS YOU SAFE CONDUCT--AND HERE IS HIS ROYAL SEAL TO PROVE IT.
THE SEAL OF LIONHEART--!


UPON SEEING THE ROYAL SEAL, EVERY YEOMAN PRESENT BENT HIS KNEES IN RESPECT -- WHICH SURPRISED RICHARD GREATLY.
WHY, I WAS TOLD THAT YOU WERE A DISLOYAL FIEND WHO DISOBEYED THE KING'S LAW AND DID ALL MANNER OF EVIL.
NAY, SIR ABBOT, I HATE UNJUST SHERIFFS AND GREEDY MONKS, BUT I LOVE NO MAN MORE THAN MY GALLANT KING, AND IF YOU ARE HIS MESSENGER AND BEAR HIS SEAL --

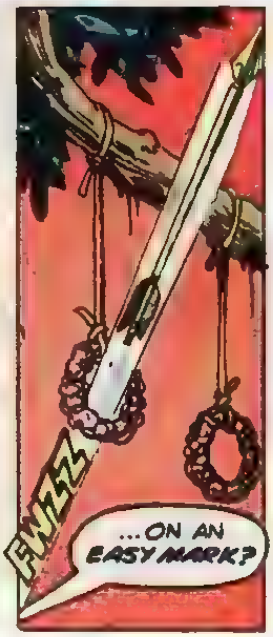

"--THEN I MAKE YOU WELCOME TO THE GREENWOOD, AND TODAY YOU SHALL DINE WITH ME FOR THE LOVE OF OUR KING UNDER MY TRYSTING TREE."
BY MY FAITH, THESE FELLOWS ARE MORE AT HIS BIDDING THAN MY MEN BE AT MINE. CAN A "FIEND" BE SO LOVED...?


SWIFTLY, A FEAST UNSURPASSED WAS MADE READY, MOSTLY THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THE BEAUTIFUL MAID MARIAN...
AND HOW LIKE YOU OUR TABLE, SIR ABBOT?
DELICIOUS -- BETTER THAN THE BEST DINING ROOM IN THE BIGGEST PALACE! ONE SHOULD EAT OUT IN THE OPEN MORE OFTEN -- IT ENRICHES THE APPETITE TO LUSTY PROPORTIONS.

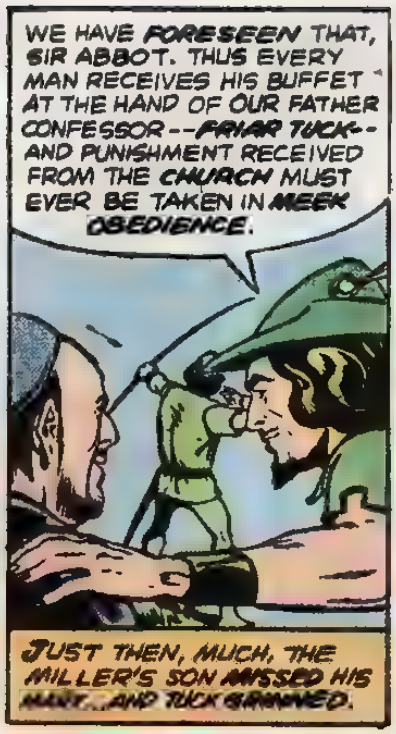
AND WHEN THE DINNER HAD BEEN LUSTILY DEVOURED...
NOW YOU SHALL SEE WHAT SORT OF LIFE WE LEAD IN THE FOREST -- SO YOU MAY REPORT OUR DOINGS TO MY LORD KING RICHARD.
TIME FOR SOME SPORT, MY MERRY MEN!

AND SO THE YEOMEN FELL TO THEIR DEAREST SPORT OF ALL, SETTING UP TARGETS OF ROSE GARLANDS, THROUGH WHICH ARROWS HAD TO BE SHOT WITHOUT TOUCHING LEAF OR FLOWER.
BY MY FAITH, GOOD YEOMAN! THOSE MARKS ARE SET A FULL FIFTY PACES TOO FAR AWAY!
NAY, SIR ABBOT...

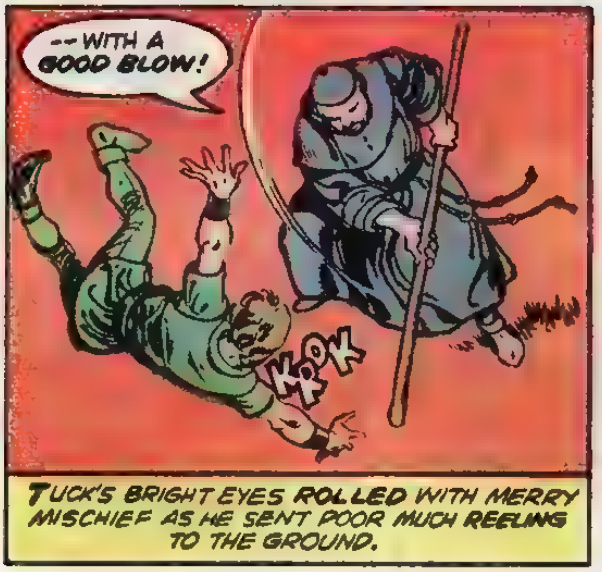
WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO TO PRACTICE...
TWANG

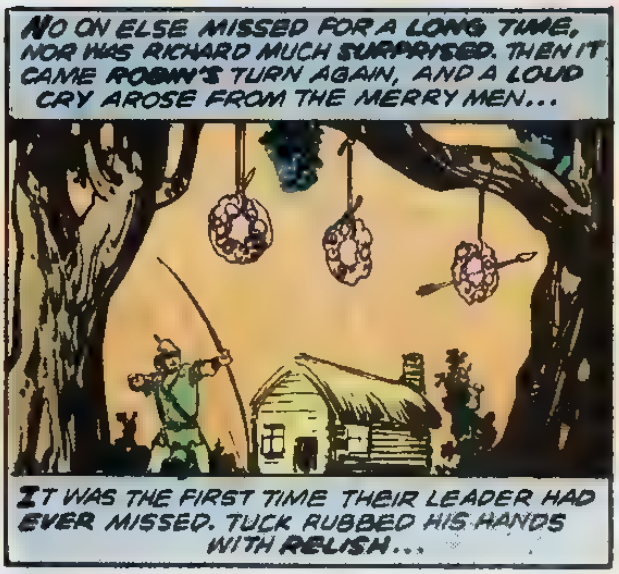

FWIZZZ
...ON AN EASY MARK?

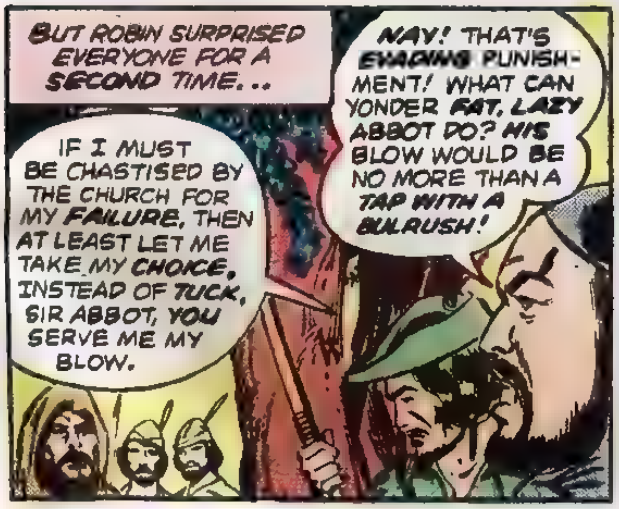
AND SHOULD ANY MAN MISS THE MARK, HE MUST TAKE A STOUT BUFFET ON THE EAR IN PENALTY.
BUT DOES NOT SUCH PUNISHMENT BREED ILL WILL AMONG YOUR MEN?

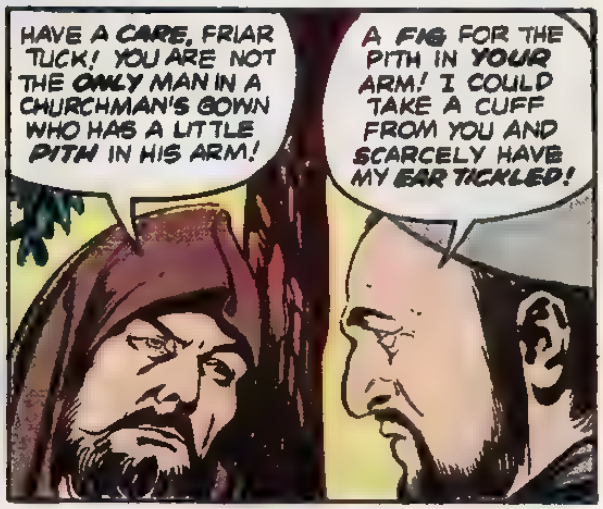

WE HAVE FORESEEN THAT, SIR ABBOT. THUS EVERY MAN RECEIVES HIS BUFFET AT THE HAND OF OUR FATHER CONFESSOR--FRIAR TUCK--AND PUNISHMENT RECEIVED FROM THE CHURCH MUST EVER BE TAKEN IN MEEK OBEDIENCE.
JUST THEN, MUCH, THE MILLER'S SON MISSED HIS MARK...AND TUCK GRINNED.

COME ON, MUCH -- TAKE YOUR BLOW.
AND DO YOU SMITE THEM IN EARNEST, BROTHER?
AYE, VERILY I DO, FOR IF OUR MEN SHOOT CARELESSLY, WE ARE UNDONE. SO THE BAD SHOT MUST BE PAID FOR--

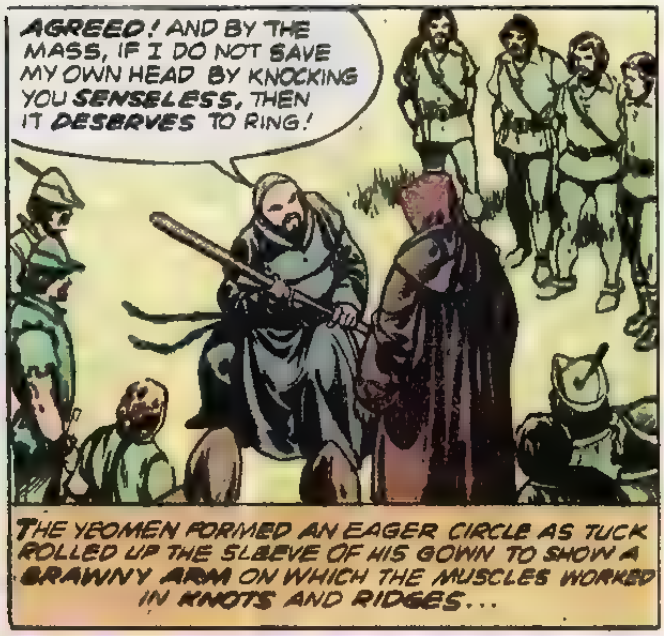

--WITH A GOOD BLOW!
KPOK
TUCK'S BRIGHT EYES ROLLED WITH MERRY MISCHIEF AS HE SENT POOR MUCH REELING TO THE GROUND.

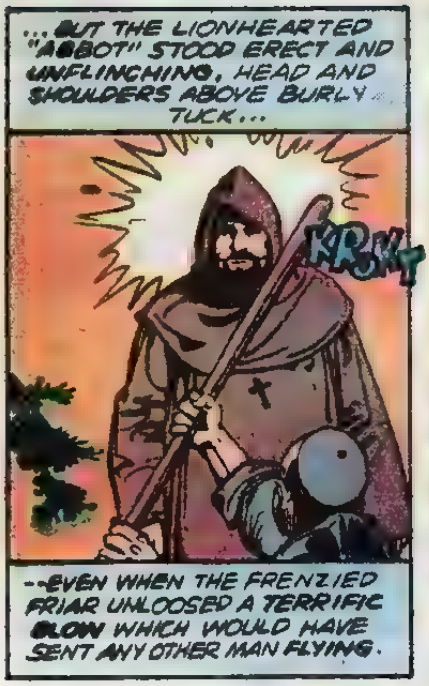

NO ON ELSE MISSED FOR A LONG TIME, NOR WAS RICHARD MUCH SURPRISED. THEN IT CAME ROBIN'S TURN AGAIN, AND A LOUD CRY AROSE FROM THE MERRY MEN...
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THEIR LEADER HAD EVER MISSED. TUCK RUBBED HIS HANDS WITH RELISH...


BUT ROBIN SURPRISED EVERYONE FOR A SECOND TIME...
IF I MUST BE CHASTISED BY THE CHURCH FOR MY FAILURE, THEN AT LEAST LET ME TAKE MY CHOICE, INSTEAD OF TUCK, SIR ABBOT, YOU SERVE ME MY BLOW.
NAY! THAT'S EVADING PUNISHMENT! WHAT CAN YONDER FAT, LAZY ABBOT DO? HIS BLOW WOULD BE NO MORE THAN A TAP WITH A BULRUSH!


HAVE A CARE, FRIAR TUCK! YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY MAN IN A CHURCHMAN'S GOWN WHO HAS A LITTLE PITH IN HIS ARM!
A FIG FOR THE PITH IN YOUR ARM! I COULD TAKE A CUFF FROM YOU AND SCARCELY HAVE MY EAR TICKLED!

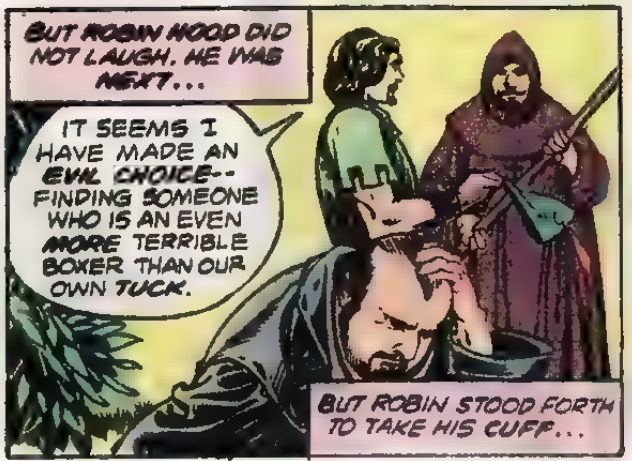
AND WOULD YOU NOT? THEN ACCEPT THIS OFFER--I WILL ABIDE YOUR BLOW IF YOU WILL ABIDE MINE!
AND DO I DELIVER THE FIRST BLOW?
AYE!

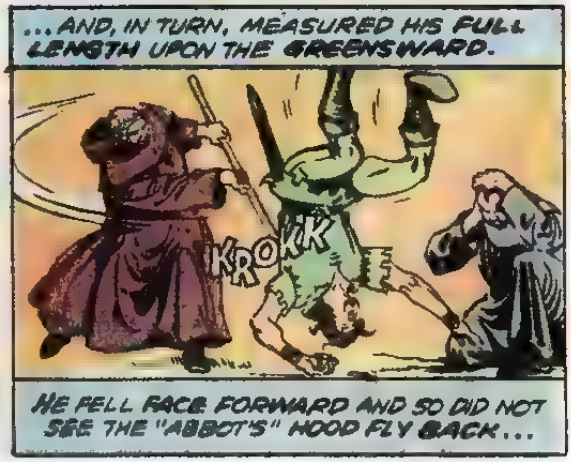

AGREED! AND BY THE MASS, IF I DO NOT SAVE MY OWN HEAD BY KNOCKING YOU SENSELESS, THEN IT DESERVES TO RING!
THE YEOMEN FORMED AN EAGER CIRCLE AS TUCK ROLLED UP THE SLEEVE OF HIS GOWN TO SHOW A BRAWNY ARM ON WHICH THE MUSCLES WORKED IN KNOTS AND RIDGES...


...BUT THE LIONHEARTED "ABBOT" STOOD ERECT AND UNFLINCHING, HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE BURLY TUCK...
KROKT
--EVEN WHEN THE FRENZIED FRIAR UNLOOSED A TERRIFIC BLOW WHICH WOULD HAVE SENT ANY OTHER MAN FLYING.

THE YEOMEN RAISED A GREAT SHOUT OF APPLAUSE ...AND THEN--
AH, Y-YOU CUT A...GOODLY FIGURE, ABBOT...
AYE, FRIAR TUCK, AND NOW...IT'S MY TURN...

TUCK FLEW HEAD OVER HEELS, THEN, AS IF A THUNDERBOLT HAD STRUCK HIM...
KROKT
...AND EVERY MAN WHO HAD EVER FELT THE WEIGHT OF THE FRIAR'S FIST SHOUTED IN GLEE.


BUT ROBIN HOOD DID NOT LAUGH. HE WAS NEXT...
IT SEEMS I HAVE MADE AN EVIL CHOICE--FINDING SOMEONE WHO IS AN EVEN MORE TERRIBLE BOXER THAN OUR OWN TUCK.
BUT ROBIN STOOD FORTH TO TAKE HIS CUFF...


...AND, IN TURN, MEASURED HIS FULL LENGTH UPON THE GREENSWARD.
KROKK
HE FELL FACE FORWARD AND SO DID NOT SEE THE "ABBOT'S" HOOD FLY BACK...

IN TRUTH, SIR ABBOT, YOU ARE A STALWART FELLOW...WITH MORE PITH IN YOUR ARM THAN ANY CHURCHMAN SHOULD POSSESS...
AND WHEN ROBIN ROSE, HE STILL DID NOT SEE THE MAN WHO HAD STRUCK HIM DOWN...
BUT THE OTHERS DID.
PARDON, SIRE--PARDON!
EH--? PARDON FOR WHAT, LITTLE JOHN? NO NEED TO FEAR THIS MIGHTY ABBOT--YOU DID NOT MISS THE MARK...
THE ABBOT IS...IS... IS THE KING--?!!
MERCY, SIRE! MERCY FOR WHAT I AND MY MEN HAVE SAID AND DONE! HAD WE KNOWN--
MERCY YOU ALREADY HAVE, GOOD ROBIN HOOD, BY GOD OR MAN, THAT WAS FUN, BUT NOW, WILL YOU HAVE A PLACE IN MY SERVICE--AS ONE OF MY LIEUTENANTS?
I WILL, MY LORD! FROM THIS DAY AND FOREVER AFTER, I AM YOUR MAN!
GOOD. THEN, FOR OUR RETURN TO NOTTINGHAM, HAVE YOU ANY GREEN CLOTH TO SPARE? YOUR SUITS OF LINCOLN GREEN--
"--LOOK EXCEEDINGLY COMFORTABLE, AND WOULD HONOR EVEN A KING."
IT SEEMS YOU WERE WRONG ABOUT ROBIN HOOD AND HIS MEN, MY DEAR SHERIFF--GRAVELY WRONG.
AND THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM, TO BE SURE, LOOKED ON VERY SOURLY AT THE SIGHT OF THIS FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN KING RICHARD AND ROBIN HOOD.
BEFORE THE RETURN TO LONDON, THERE WAS A GRAND WEDDING IN THE NOTTINGHAM CHURCH, AND MAID MARIAN BECAME THE BRIDE OF ROBIN HOOD. THE KING NOT ONLY GRACED THE WEDDING WITH HIS PRESENCE, BUT ALSO RAISED ROBIN TO THE RANK OF A NOBLE...
--PROCLAIM THEE SIR ROBERT, THE EARL OF HUNTINGDON.
AND SO ROBIN HOOD ENTERED THE SERVICE OF THE LION HEART...AND LEFT THE GREENWOOD GLADES OF SHERWOOD, AS HE THOUGHT, FOREVER...

VIII: ROBIN HOOD SHOOTS HIS LAST ARROW
FOR SOME TIME ROBIN HOOD WAS QUITE HAPPY IN THE SERVICE OF HIS KING AND PARTICIPATED IN MANY ADVENTURES...
...INCLUDING THE CRUSADES.
THEIR RETURN TO LONDON TOWN FROM THE HOLY LAND WAS A TRIUMPHANT MARCH...
...BUT ROBIN SOON FOUND LIFE IN THE COURT EXTREMELY WEARISOME AND DULL.
WORSE, RICHARD WAS LEAVING ENGLAND AGAIN...
...VACATING HIS THRONE WITHIN THE PRESENCE OF PRINCE JOHN--A FALSE, CRUEL, COWARDLY MAN WHO LUSTED FOR THAT THRONE...
...AND WHO CLEARLY HATED ROBIN.

IT WAS A MORNING IN MAY, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A BEAUTIFUL MORNING HAD ROBIN NOT BEEN COOPED UP BEHIND THE WALLS OF LONDON TOWN...

THERE WERE BIRDS OUTSIDE, THE TWANG OF BOWS AND THE WHISTLE OF ARROWS, THE SIGH OF THE WIND AMONG THE LEAVES...THE FOREST, HIS BELOVED FOREST...

ROBIN...ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?

AYE, JOHN... I THINK I AM.

TONIGHT, THEN.

THERE WERE ONLY FOUR THAT NIGHT WHO SLIPPED SO SECRETLY FROM THE GATES OF LONDON TOWN--ROBIN, MARIAN, LITTLE JOHN, AND WILL SCARLET...

MOST OF THE OTHERS HAD ALREADY LEFT.

PRINCE JOHN HAD ASKED ROBIN'S HELP TO SEIZE THE THRONE IN RICHARD'S ABSENCE. ROBIN HAD REFUSED IN NO POLITE TERMS. THEY HAD TO LEAVE SECRETLY...

...SLIPPING INTO THE DARK FOREST LIKE HANDS INTO SOFT DEERSKIN GLOVES.

OH, HOW WONDERFUL IT WAS TO REGAIN THE OLD HAUNTS, TO TAKE UP THE FAMILIAR DRESS OF LINCOLN GREEN, TO ROAM AMONG THE GREAT HARTS AND DUN DEER...

...OVER WOODLAND TRAILS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE DIRTY CITY STREETS!

THEN CAME THEIR OLD COMRADE MUCH, THE MILLER'S SON, BEARING BAD NEWS...

ROBIN--! KING RICHARD IS DEAD IN FRANCE--AND JOHN NOW RULES THE LAND! YOU HAVE MUCH TO BEWARE--ONE OF HIS FIRST COMMANDS WAS YOUR CAPTURE!

SO...HE IS KING JOHN AT LAST.

AND ONCE MORE I AM AN OUTLAW IN THE GREENWOOD ...BUT ONCE AGAIN WE HAVE A KING WHOSE DEER IT WILL BE A PLEASURE TO STEAL...

...SO WELCOME TO THE MERRY OLD LIFE! 'TIS A THOUSAND TIMES HAPPIER AND MORE JOYOUS THAN TO LIVE IN THE BEST PALACE A TOWN CAN AFFORD!

HAIL TO THE FOREST GLADE! HAIL SHERWOOD!

THE CRIES WERE ECHOED AND THE BOWS WERE WAVED. SWIFTLY ALL THE OLD FACES GATHERED ABOUT THEIR MASTER, AND SOON THE MINSTREL ALLAN-A-DALE HAD NEW BALLADS TO WRITE.

TIME PASSED, AND KING JOHN PROVED TO BE A FAR MORE TERRIBLE ENEMY THAN THE SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM HAD EVER BEEN. FORCE AFTER FORCE INVADED SHERWOOD AND MANY A WILD SKIRMISH WAS FOUGHT, SOME WON BY ROBIN AND HIS MEN...

...AND SOME LOST--UNTIL, AS THE OLD BALLAD SAYS, "ROBIN DWELLED IN GREENWOOD TWENTY YEARS AND TWO..."

...AND IN THIS TIME, SAW MANY CHANGES... AND LOST MANY A BELOVED PARTNER.

FRIAR TUCK

MARIAN

HE FOUND HE COULD WEEP AGAIN, SOMETHING HE HAD NEVER DONE IN COURT.

AND, WHILE HIS FAITHFUL LIEUTENANT, LITTLE JOHN, WAS EVER AT HIS SIDE, THERE CAME A TIME WHEN ROBIN HOOD'S GREAT YEW BOW BECAME TOO STIFF TO BEND, AND THE SHAFT DID NOT TRAVEL TO THE OLD RANGE.

HIS STRENGTH WAS FAILING AND HE FELT LISTLESS AND ILL AT EASE...

MY COUSIN IS THE PRIORESS...THERE AT KIRKLEY NUNNERY, LITTLE JOHN...AND SHE IS SKILLED IN MEDICINES. WILL YOU...WAIT HERE?

AYE, ROBIN. I'LL WAIT 'TIL THE LEAVES FALL.

BUT WHAT ROBIN DID NOT KNOW...

THEN YOU WILL OBEY KING JOHN AND HELP US STOP THIS OUTLAW ROBIN HOOD--IF THE CHANCE SHOULD ARISE?

OF COURSE--YOU KNOW WHERE MY LOYALTIES LIE.

ROBIN WAS SURPRISED TREACHERY--NOT FROM A PRIORESS, AND CERTAINLY NOT FROM HIS COUSIN...

...BUT WHEN HE STRUGGLED UP THE STAIRS TO THAT TOWER ROOM...

JUST DRINK THIS, COUSIN ROBIN... AND ALL YOUR CARES WILL BE OVER...

...HE RECEIVED A MEDICINE OF POISON.

THEY WERE FEEBLE SOUNDS, MOCKERIES OF THE ROBUST CALL WHICH HAD ONCE RESOUNDED THROUGH SHERWOOD...
ROBIN.
TRAWW
TURAW
TURAW
INDEED, NEVER HAD LITTLE JOHN HEARD THE THREE BLASTS SOUND SO WEAKLY...

...BUT HEAR THEM HE DID.
ROBIN--

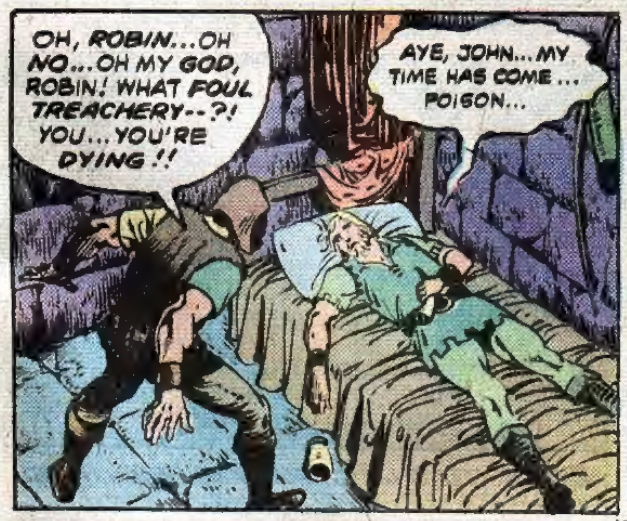
PAM
PAM
PAM

ROBIN!!

BRAKK!!

ROBIN!!

BWAKT


OH, ROBIN...OH NO...OH MY GOD, ROBIN! WHAT FOUL TREACHERY--?! YOU...YOU'RE DYING!!
AYE, JOHN...MY TIME HAS COME... POISON...

THEN GRANT ME ONE LAST BOON, ROBIN-- I BEG YOU!
WHAT BOON, LITTLE JOHN... CAN I GRANT YOU...NOW...?

LET ME BURN THIS WICKED PLACE DOWN, ROBIN--CONSUME THIS WHOLE NEST OF TRAITORS IN FLAME!
NAY...YOU KNOW I CANNOT GRANT THAT BOON, JOHN...FOR NEVER HAVE WE INJURED A WOMAN... OR EVEN A MAN IN WOMAN'S COMPANY...
NOW, JOHN...GIVE ME MY BOW... AND HOLD ME UP... THAT I MAY SHOOT A GOOD GRAY GOOSE SHAFT...
SOON...YOU WILL LAY ME DOWN, LITTLE JOHN...
TWANG
ROBIN SMILED AS HIS BOW TWANGED FULL AND DEEP...
...AND HIS EARS CAUGHT THE SOUND WHICH WAS THE SWEETEST MUSIC IN THE WORLD TO HIM...AN ARROW IN FLIGHT.
FWMMMM
HIS LAST ARROW.
LAY ME, JOHN ...IN A GRAVE OF GREEN...WHERE THE ARROW... FALLSSS!...
AYE, ROBIN ...AND WITH YOUR GOOD BOW ...AT YOUR SIDE.
AND SO DIED ROBIN HOOD, IN THE TREMBLING ARMS OF HIS FAITHFUL LIEUTENANT, LITTLE JOHN.
IT TRAVELED TO THE OLD RANGE...
CHUT
AYE, AND BEYOND.
AND SO THEY LAID HIM DOWN WHERE THAT LAST MIGHT ARROW HAD STRUCK THE TURF...
...AND A STONE WAS SET UP AT HEAD...
HERE UNDERNEATH THIS LITTLE STONE, LIES ROBERT, EARL OF HUNTINGDON; NEVER ARCHER AS HE SO GOOD, AND PEOPLE CALLED HIM ROBIN HOOD. SUCH OUTLAWS AS HE AND HIS MEN, WILL ENGLAND NEVER SEE AGAIN.
BUT THE STONE LIES...FOR BOLD ROBIN HOOD HAS NOT DIED. AND HE NEVER WILL...

reyctamondong
circa 1977

ON SALE NOW!

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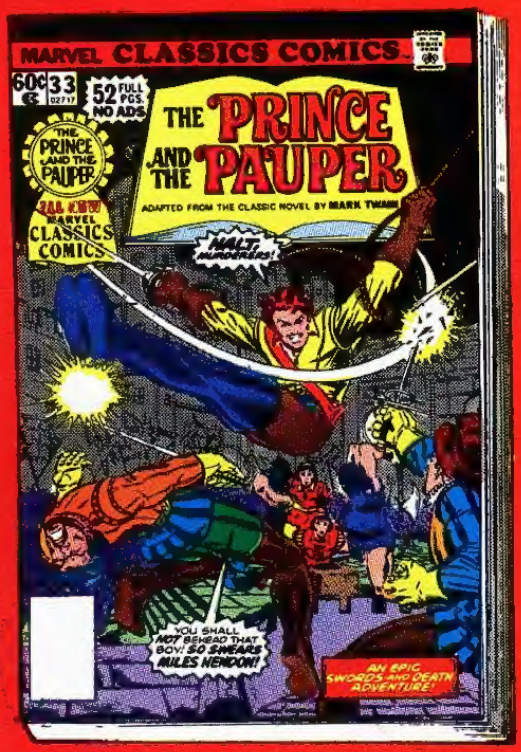
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